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THE KING'S ENVOY

BY HOWARD WISWALL BIBLE

THE KING'S ENVOY

OR, WHEN THE
LAND WAS YOUNG

A CHIVALROUS ROMANCE IN FOUR ACTS

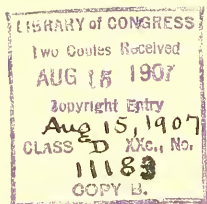
BY

HOWARD WISWALL BIBLE



1907

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CHARACTERS

The Governor.
Captain Calvert.
Lieutenant Brainerd.
Thomas Mason.
Hector Malcolm.
Dick Fellows.
The Minister.
A Sergeant.
First Soldier.
Second Soldier.
First Villager.
Second Villager.
The Mohawk.
The Sachem.
The War Chief.
A Settlement Indian.
Maggie Mason.
Mistress Thankful.
Indian Maid.
Soldiers, Indians, Villagers, Etc.

THE KING'S ENVOY, OR WHEN
THE LAND WAS YOUNG

ACT I

SCENE I

Period: Reign of Charles the Second.

Place: Shore of a New England Colony and near by.

Hour: Early afternoon.

Scene: A cabin of a colonist almost within the woods on the edge of the settlement clearing. The cabin is built of rough-hewn logs, crudely fitted one to the other at each corner, in the way of the time. A small, stout door, well-hinged, swings inward and stands open; by it rest the heavy cross logs that bar it to resist attack. A few windows are high set and small, with shutters of the strength of the door. These are studded with small gun holes for defense of the inmates. The glimpse of the cabin's interior is cheery; a fire burns, for the Spring day has some lingering Winter chill. A rough bench is by the door, and sitting upon it is Thomas Mason, a jovial colonist of an unknown past. In hand he has a blunderbuss—an old-time brass-barreled arm that has been with him on some morning hunt. He begins cleaning it, meanwhile breaking into occasional song.

MASON.

Be happy as the breezes be,

Be lusty as the blows,

For that's the way to take the tides—

Just follow where life goes.

(Blows through powder hole in flint lock of gun.)

And if the storms they come thy way,

Why, ride them through and through,

Since every craft it hath a port

And any port will do.

(Looks down barrel after cleaning it.)

Some folks they think there's only one
 In petticoats or pants,
 Yet they'd soon find out their mistake,
 If given half the chance.
(Fits flint carefully in lock, snaps it.)

And there's a game called consequence,
 'Tis well to learn to play,
 For every man must toss the dice
 And every man must pay.
(Begins loading gun from powderhorn. Enter MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE.

Thou hast ne'er paid. Here singing time away!

MASON.

Aye, that hath I right merrily, as vows
 Of marriage tell.

MAGGIE.

Time-spoiling royst'rer thou!
 Good energy was beat by sloth day thou
 Wert born.

MASON *(putting gun aside)*.

And luck it was away, else for
 A wife I'd not found thee.

MAGGIE *(starts for him)*.

Out this, I say.

MASON.

Nay, hold thy wrath within thy fist for there's
 Some news to tell.

MAGGIE.

Then why by powers of
 The devil, were you sitting here and song
 A-warbling, when you could a-given me
 Some of the goings on?

MASON.

Aye, now and if
 Thou art then eager for the news, why stay.
 Be idle questions such a feast for ears?
 It is no trick of sense that quiets thee
 When slander stirs.

MAGGIE.

Out it, and add less dress

To speech.

MASON.

But speech it should be dressed for sake
Of modesty. If 'twas so garbed, there'd be
A longer garment by reflection worn,
And less of person shown.

MAGGIE.

Away with it!

Such tittle-tattle tells me little when
I want thy news.

MASON.

Good dame, there's some repose
In what thou termost tittle-tattle, whilst
There's much disquiet in the news.

MAGGIE.

Then more

The urgency for telling me.

MASON.

Not so;

Fair one of doubtful wit, for trouble hath
A pace to outrun us, no matter what
Our speed may be, but since thou hast within
Thine ears the bee of importunity,
Why, then, perchance 'tis well ill news should here
And now spring trap on thee. The Gov'rnor hath
In council sat ere sun was up, and now
A woman's been declared a witch.

MAGGIE.

God's love!

You set me all a-tremble; who is she?

MASON.

The lass who from Virginia's settlements
Did come; whose sunny smiles and laughter have
So oddly set in our solemn midst,
I fear 'tis she.

MAGGIE.

Remember once when thou
Didst say she was a very witch?

MASON.

Nay, thou
A common fault art guilty of, that which
Doth fit thy thought unto another's act
And then think act as thought.

MAGGIE.

I think no act
For thee.

MASON.

'Tis way thou hast of thrusting 'tween
My teeth thy words, so that my tongue takes blame
For what thou art some fearful of.

MAGGIE.

Look you,
When woman hath for husband man who thinks
Not himself then 'tis time for her to think
And talk for him.

MASON.

Aye, true, if she will fight
The fights her thoughts and tongue provoke.

MAGGIE.

Thou hast
As yet to fight for me.

MASON.

But not with thee.
Nay, spare thy hand and hold thy tongue, for here
Come those who count thy speech by some discount.

MAGGIE (*entering house*).
I will have none of them.

MASON.

A wise resolve
Most wisely made, for who decides in time
Decides then well, and yet I wager voice
Without will bring thee straightway back again,
For never hath I heard old slander's tooth
A-munching on some gossip that thou hast
Not at the table been. (*Enter DICK FELLOWS.*) 'Tis
after all
That fellow,—Dick! (*Greets him.*) Is all well, Fel-
low Dick?

DICK.

Good greeting, Master Thomas Mason; how
Is thy good Mistress? Fares she well?

MASON.

Aye with

A stout clothes stick and anger she abides,
Which is a close contagion to sore shins.

DICK.

A real fine day—much like 'twas yesterday. (*Looks at sky.*)

What thinkst thou, 'twill on the morrow rain?

MASON.

Howbeit thy talk doth on one topic dwell—
Of weather, bright and cloudy, snow or rain?
Is present subject cause, or hath converse
Such narrow limit? Purse and thee if true
Then hath a difference.

DICK.

My subject's touched.

MASON.

Like flies when lit upon a sore—well hit.

DICK.

'Tis subject I would talk upon, what make
You of our difference?

MASON.

'Tis difference

Apparency doth answer thee. Thou art
A thrifty spender, tied unto thy coin;
With glist'ning eye on what doth come thy way,
And woe-begonèd gaze bent t'ward what goes.
Thou art a server at left hand of life,
I stand at right—despiser of thy hoard.
That heaps the love of money o'er the love
Of man.

DICK.

I'm ready now to spend the coin.

MASON.

I'll warrant thee thou hast concealed object.

DICK.

Nay, now dispel thy doubts. Let them away.

MASON.

'Tis folly to send doubts away on all
Four winds, for never to thyself may you
Then say "'twas as I said 'twould be."

DICK.

I will

Right freely part with coin for teaching of
Thy songs, the cultivation of my voice
And bant'ring skill at repartee.

MASON.

Then count

This prim'ry lesson. Learn to catechize
Thyself with questions; find answers, and laugh
At sallies of thy wit, or what you take
For it. Then slap thy sides right roundly at
Each joke or what you think should have been one,
And after spending time that way, desist,
For when you pluck the goose 'tis well to wait
Till feathers grow again.

DICK.

I fear thou art

Not serious.

MASON.

For proof, give me thy coin.

DICK.

Not much of it, for songs are yet to come.

MAGGIE (*in window*).

Aye, right thou art, and voice for singing, too.

MASON.

One piece will suffice far as we have gone,
There are some varied ways of singing—to
The cock a lusty crow is song—the cow
Finds music in the gentle moo—the sheep
Hears melody in plaintive baa, so on
And on till every noisy thing's had say.
Well, man hath all these voices in himself
And I must hear thy tone to learn what best
You fit—the crow, the moo or baa: Hence give
Thy voice freedom in this balmy air.

(DICK shouts shrilly in squeaking voice. MASON
claps hands to ears. MAGGIE retreats from
window.)

MASON (*shouting*).

Now hold, aye hold, I pray thee hold! Thou hast
The ass's bray—'tis rarely beautiful.

DICK.

A singer I'll be, since 'tis beautiful.

MASON.

I said 'twas "rarely beautiful," and I
Said right, but if thy wits find other fit
For words, so be 't. Another coin, for here
Are some newcomers to the scene.

(*Enter* CAPTAIN CALVERT *and* LIEUTENANT
BRAINERD. *Exit* DICK.)

MASON.

I bid

Ye hearty welcome comrades. What doth make
Ye both so serious. Thy faces look
To me as though life's smiles were dead.

CALVERT.

Here, now

When frost hath left the ground with fields unplowed
We thought to find thee, man. We come upon
A matter of much grave import. 'Tis past
High noon, yet from sunrise at Council held
'Twas charged that witchcraft's practised in our midst;
Aye, proven so. Since talk hath gone about
Thou knowst where suspicion rests. And hence
The Gov'nor summons thee to testify.

MASON.

On me, I fear, from look that lights the eye
Of Brainerd here, and then if not on me,
Perchance the dame I now call wife, hath loosed
Her tongue beyond my door.

BRAINERD.

It commands here

And much beyond, if loudly spoken words
Tell power.

CALVERT.

Let occasion savor more
Of dignity, hence house thy tongue and bide
With me to Council, where they'd question thee.
(*Enter* MAGGIE.)

THE KING'S ENVOY

MAGGIE.

Thy voices they have reached to me within.

BRAINERD.

Their reach it was not far I'll warrant thee.

MAGGIE (*pays no attention.*)

And I'd know who is talking witchcraft now.

Methinks there's too much busy-bodding

Here'bouts, when peaceful folk are called upon

For witch's testimony—why 'tis like

When I was called a scold.

CALVERT.

Good dame, the scold

A man makes merry with, the witch she doth

Make merry with his soul.

MASON.

Aye wench, go thou

Within to dream with snores till I come back

For penalty of nagging.

(*Exit MASON, CALVERT and BRAINERD.*)MAGGIE (*watching them down path.*)

There's mischief

In air of them. See now, they walk with some

New inches to their height. I'll warrant there

Are buttons on their jerkins feeling strain.

Such pompous mien doth lend their girth!

(*Enter WAPANOAG, a settlement Indian.*)

WAPANOAG.

Much talk.

MAGGIE (*turning toward him.*)

What's that to you, psalm-singing devil that

Thou art!

WAPANOAG.

The devil he heap busy when

The squaw she plenty talk.

MAGGIE (*grabs stick, starts for him.*)

Get gone; get gone.

WAPANOAG.

Now Wapanoag he come for talk, no fight.

MAGGIE (*stops chase.*)

Remember then the tone of chatter used.

WAPANOAG.

Where Yellow Bird; she here?

MAGGIE.

Is she not in

Her cabin? She's not at the Council now,
Is she?

WAPANOAG.

No, not at Council: there they say

She witch. Bad medicine; they burn her soon,
I tell.

MAGGIE.

'Tis devils' work this Council: that

Would visit ills upon a tender maid.

Here, Wapanoag, now go find her and if

She be away in woods, there bid her stay

In hiding till we come to her. Now go.

WAPANOAG.

I go for Yellow Bird. Go far.

(*Exit* WAPANOAG.)

MAGGIE.

Now will

I hie me to that Council and by faith,

Round-bellied complacency will find cause

For some misgiving ere I cease to speak.

(*Exit* MAGGIE.)

CURTAIN.

ACT I

SCENE II

Scene: Interior of a large log house built of heavy rough-hewn timber, designed as a place of refuge should occasion demand, and used for public functions of the Governor and Council of the Colony. Doors right and left. Windows centre. A long table at back, where the Governor and Council are seated. Chairs both sides of table. A court in session, soldiers, witnesses, spectators about.

Time: Mid-afternoon, same day. Enter CAPTAIN CALVERT, LIEUTENANT BRAINERD, and TOM MASON.

CALVERT.

My lord, thy quest of accusers
And of accusèd hath fared ill, for she
Whom most we want, is still at large.

GOVERNOR.

And so delay it brings us no
Reward, and time thus spent finds no
Requitement.

CALVERT.

Aye, I fear me, sir,
That such is truth's decree, and if
Not boldly lending voice to thought
I'd brand absence here proof of guilt.

MASON.

A captain of conclusions now?

CALVERT.

I bid thee fit thy words to place,
And actions to occasion, else
Their misfit find a punishment.

MASON.

Some punishment's reward.

CALVERT.

Be serious.

MASON.

Aye, draw long faces where the sombre masks
Of melancholy fittingly repose.
In truth, misfortune fetches, and some here
They carry for't, good Captain, now like thee.

GOVERNOR.

Thy talk in vein so light at time of deep
Import belies decorum, courts disdain.

MASON.

Reply takes flavor from its query. Thus
My answers link the questions one by one.

GOVERNOR.

We are assembled now to learn
Who suffers from a witch's curse.

MASON.

So was thy purpose once explained: what would
You have of me?

GOVERNOR.

With how much knowledge art
Thou possessed of a maid who lately came
Amongst us from Virginia's settlements?

MASON.

I know such maid.

GOVERNOR.

To good or ill?

MASON.

To good.

Since I've ne'er witnessed ill in her, my lord.

GOVERNOR.

Hast been informed of charge which hath been laid
Against this maid—nefarious and most
Ungodly practise, known as witchcraft? There's
Before me here much evidence: the death
Of cattle by no cause; strange sickness's spread;
Unholy sounds by night, while near unto
Her cabin on the forest edge there hath
Appeared, when gray dawn routed dark, figures
Of demons passing back and forth from woods,

Or being swallowed by the opening earth.
All under solemn oath hath been declared,
Now what say you as neighbor, to these things?

MASON.

I knew myself no neighbor to
Such practises as you describe,
But I am neighbor to the maid,
And as good neighbor do avoid
Too close a gaze, for ne'er was eye
Of pryer open that it failed
To see.

CALVERT.

Then nothing's been observed
By thee?

MASON.

I said not what had been
Observed, nor made I mention of
A blindness unto aught that hath
Been told.

GOVERNOR.

Again to point. Thou art
A man much given to the ways
Of idleness, which lends somewhat
To observation, and, as thou
Art near to this incestuous den,
Be free in speech for my guidance,
And this, the Council's, worthy act.

MASON.

The right it weights this charge with just rebuke.
It sorts the truth from out the weedy lies:
To build for justice some new monument,
My lord, the wrong by law is this or that;
By nature little of what man decrees,
A word misplaced, a deed misdona, and then
Perchance, 'tis neither one, but that undone
Or done while more of man than teaching held.

CALVERT.

An advocate, my lord, well versed in arts
Of maid's defense—a high and mighty speech
Employer, he who pleads. We knew not that
Such lawyer's talent lived with us as this.

MASON.

Nay, somewhat splashed with learning lawyers speak,
A son'rous voice for light pretext employed,
With dignity a builder of the law,
Small-souled and oft small-creasured beings. They
Lend mock'ry to the garb that justice wears,
And when the pleader finds the bench, he sits
Enmasked by stern and pompous look, to flay
The culprit ere he's charged—condemn ere proved.
I am none such, my lord, nor would I be.
A simple soldier here you see. With hand
That fits the hilt of sword, and arm to wield
It well. With limbs inured to camp and field.

CALVERT.

Not often soldiers speak with fluent tongue.

MASON.

Nay, there are times they have a nasty one.

GOVERNOR.

Such clashing words must cease. Attend my speech:
Now Thomas Mason, tell about this witch.

MASON.

Thy words they tell of motive sinister
And trial none. By term of witch, and brand
Of vile incest on dwelling of the maid
A verdict's given ere 'tis rendered. Thus
Condemned the maid is now. This being truth
Why take such tardy evidence as mine?

GOVERNOR.

We sit to question, not to answer here.

CALVERT.

Licentious talk of him is well within
The scope of dire contempt. I fear the spell
Hath reached to where he dwells, my lord.

MASON.

Aye, spell

Of meddling power that found me content,
As doubtless now this tender maid would be
Had thy ill news not overtaken her.

GOVERNOR.

No further speech, but answers, aye or nay:
Hast thou or thine seen aught of these strange things?

MASON.

For me, I answer nay: for mine I leave
Thy question as it was.

GOVERNOR.

We are here to

Inquire who suffers.

MASON.

Thou wilt find in quest
Of those who suffer few absent. For proof
Here comes my worthy dame. Examine her,
I wish thee joy indeed on such errand.

GOVERNOR.

A plague on her and you, for 'twixt her talk,
Thy answers, and the answers that
Thy answers will provoke, there will
Be little heard save what's irrelevant
And most undignified.

MASON.

Now hold, my lord,
I pray thee to refrain, else such display
Of courteous discourtesy, now prompt
Adieus.

CALVERT.

Such mock'ry of authority
Ne'er hath I seen before.

MASON.

Short vision oft

Hath proved a gift.

(Enter MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE.

My lord, where husbands go,
Their wives should follow and so here I be.

CALVERT.

Didst thou receive a summons to attend?

MAGGIE.

Aye, from the marriage sacrament which reads:
"What God hath joined together let no man
E'er put asunder."

CALVERT.

Hold, use not the words
Of God for thine own purpose!

MAGGIE.

Fie upon
Thee, Captain Calvert, know you woman's thought
Ill of who forgets vows of marriage?

MASON (*to minister*).

Sir,

I crave attention of thy office for
Our captain's morals here.

CALVERT (*angrily to Governor*).

I like not this
Reflection, and protection crave, such as
My sword could serve without.

MAGGIE.

Ah, woe is me,
When soldiers talk of swords for use against
A woman!

CALVERT.

Words of mine, good dame, they had
No such import.

GOVERNOR.

We play too freely with
Such interruptions. If the evidence
Be in, we will now retire.

MAGGIE.

My lord,
I'd speak before you voice decision that
Thy face betrays.

GOVERNOR.

Confine thy words to facts
And knowledge; speak with point and brevity.

MAGGIE.

With point I warrant thee, with brevity,
That's as may be: I am close neighbor to
The maiden Thankful, who is falsely charged
Holds commune with evil. Ofttimes, I have
Been late abed, but whene'er gaze fell t'ward

Her cabin, all was dark and still, which did
 Become her virtue well. When early dawn
 It called astir, my eyes hath wandered t'ward
 Her chimney, where in curl of slender smoke
 Her thrift was told. When day was passing, 'twas
 My habit to relieve her loneliness,
 And such occasions showed employment to
 Be honest as true maiden's is. Yet here
 For aught I see, you would condemn this maid
 So full of childlike innocence, because
 Of sickened cows and discomfort that's caused
 By overgorging appetites. Look you,
 That some hath temper to defend her from
 Such vile injustice, even if it be
 But my good man and me—a woman.

CALVERT.

Faith,

My lord, they're both bewitched.

GOVERNOR.

I fear me what

You say be true.

MASON.

Now hold I say; no ban
 Of such a disregard shall here abide.
 My lord, I left fair England's shores
 For freedom's want, as many here
 About thee did, and for the cause
 My sword hangs loose within its scabbard now.

GOVERNOR.

Friend Mason, peace! Thou art as known
 For courage as for idleness.
 We seek for no injustice here.

MASON.

Misused words too freely said
 O'er half the world's misfortune cause.

GOVERNOR (*to minister*).

I pray thee, most rev'rend sir, look well to
 The soul of this good man and worthy dame.

MAGGIE.

And I, your piousness, will pass up all
Such chance of heaven to the Gov'rnor and
The Council here, and from the cruel hands
That fix misfortune upon innocence,
I now and forever do wash mine clean.

VOICES ABOUT.

" 'Tis witchcraft, sure." " Aye, they're bewitched."

" The spell

Doth reach to where their cabin lies." " No proof
Of guilt is better than is this." " See now,
How wild they look." " Beware, and touch them not."

MINISTER (*to Maggie and Mason*).

Good people, would ye come with me unto
The meetinghouse, and there be cleansed of this
Infection?

MASON.

Nay, before receiving from
Such as thou art a part of, and it is
No part of God that thee can be,—I will
Away within the forest and unto
The heathen trust for man's true justice, which
Can never be at odds with God's.

MAGGIE.

I'll go
With thee, and gladly, as good wife—she should.

MASON.

Aye, lass, I knew thee would. Old England, kin
And home, I once forswore, and for free thought,
And speech, and act I will forswear all else
Till soil be found where such may live and thrive.

GOVERNOR.

The public hearing hath adjourned unto
A private session hence, good people, now
Disperse.

(GOVERNOR and COUNCIL retire. People dis-
perse, leaving MASON and MAGGIE alone).

MASON.

Aye, wench, we both spat fire.

MAGGIE.

If 'twill

But burn the sinning hearts of them a good
Purpose will thus be served.

MASON.

Hast ere observed

How sin will gather harvest where good doth
But gather weeds?

MAGGIE.

In four and twenty months

It seems my move, as in the game called draughts,
Is due, if meaning went with words just said.

MASON.

What, wench, dost thou find flavor in thy doubts?

MAGGIE.

Aye, to be sure; for ne'er was woman born
Who could have lived with thee and not with doubt.

MASON.

Well, let us haste away and bide the court's
Decision. Justice once again I fear
Will be misnamed.

MAGGIE.

What will befall the lass?

I fear that flames will lick her tender limbs.

MASON.

Not without scattering, I'll warrant thee,
For there are some stout fellows hereabout
Upon whose stomachs witchcraft meals do not
Sit well, especially since the victim be
Sweet Mistress Thankful. God be with her now!

MAGGIE.

Amen.

(Exit MAGGIE and MASON.)

CURTAIN.

ACT I

SCENE III

Scene: In the forest by a stream, near to a fallen tree.

Time: Late twilight; same day.

MALCOLM.

One man may differ from his kind, but scores
Will be as other scores wherever found.
They taste like doubts and play and pray alike,
With great or small in child and age the same,
In one a single likeness of them all.
In all a part of each and every one.
And, since fair nature doth profess to guide,
Why, man becomes her lover, she his bride.

(Looks about him. Picks up wild rose.)

Peace is a rose upon a thorny stem,
To live while there and die when plucked away;
And hope may picture peace that dreams doth tell;
Yet he who seeks to find it, here or there
May, ere he fall in sleep, once say: "'Tis here."
But in such sleep the rose that's plucked is one
With him, no thornèd branch may hold them more.
Thus hail fair peace, thou tender wife of war.

(He again rises and looks about.)

Yea, all directions point as one, yet, stay;
A path is pointed by the fading sun.
In truth, as stranger have I lost my self.
And man's old foe disquiet now appears,
While like as not his mate discomfort nears.
Yet soldier with a trusty blade and cloak
Is well equipped to rout misgivings out.

(Looks at sky.) And sleep beneath the stars has healthy
roof,

But while twilight still holds I'll search for path.

(Exit left into woods.)

(Enter THANKFUL from woods at right.)

THANKFUL.

Due north by fallen oak, where brook meets brook.

'Twas thus described. (*Sees tree and stream.*) Here's
oak and yonder stream.

(*Stands looking slowly about.*) And so it seems I come
before the time.

(*Looks up at sky.*) The sun yet gives its light unto the
day.

The moon wakes early since 'tis young,
And I will not have long to stay. (*Takes seat on log.*)

How quiet are these deep and trackless woods;

How sweetly laden with perfumes of Spring;

When nature were thus in such gentle mood

How strange that man should let his anger brew.

(*Reflectively.*) A year gone by tells much to us.

Aye, shorter space will rob of gain.

And filch from life much of our happiness.

The April days when they were here before

Saw me a child with what I thought was love.

Now all hath taken wings and flown away.

(*Looking toward pool, hands clasped over right
knee.*)

'Twas strange impulse to promise wed,

Led me o'er seas to these new shores.

(*Uncclasps hands.*) Revolt doth rise with blushes of
deep pain

When thought now takes that traveled path again,

And fear, with countless eyes and voice and ears

Doth send its creeping shudders through and through.

(*Changes position, chin in hand, meditatively
watching stream.*)

Then rescue by a savage such as he.

At least a noble heart beats in his breast

For when he carried me to kindred race

He played the role of tender chivalry.

Why came I here 'mongst those who think

I know the wiles of Satan's touch.

(*Gets up, crosses to pool and looks within.*)

I'm sure no witch ere had such deep blue eyes,

Nor hair so gold, nor face so round and fair.

(*Touches bosom.*) 'Tis sad, and well a merry heart
beats here

Or else I fear me 'twould not beat at all.

(*Glances westward.*) Now see the sun goes down, he'll soon draw near.

(*Becomes fearful.*) The thought brings doubt lest long forbearance cease

To charm, and good intent be thus o'ertaxed.

(*Touching sheathed knife.*) And yet why doubt with this high judgment here,

'Twill prove sufficient to sufficiency.

It opens doors no mortal hand hath broached.

(*Startled by noise.*) Who comes? Methought 'twas some unusual sound.

(*Again reflectively.*) How stranger fears bring fires to the heart,

When once unknown terror finds kindling there.

(*Alertly.*) Aye, but it is a step on crunching leaves,

And, by my faith, the stranger cavalier.

I will dissemble, don some merry cheer.

(*Conceals self behind some bushes to right. Enter*

MALCOLM.)

Now back where start was made. Ah well,

Such is the fate of every man.

He wanders here and wanders there,

But none may cut the holding cord

Without he turns to death for aid,

A friend who severs but ne'er ties,

Since strands thus cut are ever lost—

And life and death unreconciled.

(*Seats himself upon log.*)

Alas, how whims of life are knit to strife!

Who wounds by deeds doth make a surgeon's work;

But he whose words inflict the sting of pain

Has by no surgeon to relieve the hurt.

For steel of point and edge doth own respect

That never finds accord with duty, love,

And thus unkindness sharps an edged word

To slay those who most deeply feel for us.

Yet man is deaf to all that's new, save love,

And love grows old before its embers gray;

The helpless babe unwelcomed cries to him,

And genius hungered for but infant praise

Is rudely scoffed and scorned, else ridiculed.

From 'neath the tree of hope he cuts the roots,
 In God, not his, he finds a merry jest;
 And thus is he from nature weaned away.

(*Enter* THANKFUL. MALCOLM *rises, bows low.*)

MALCOLM.

To thee, fair nymph, or maid, good evening.

THANKFUL.

Sir,

Thy name of hour is wrong since evening's gone.
 'Tis night, and so I bid thee call time right.

MALCOLM.

But such were wishes good to thee from me
 And if unseasoned yet of fair intent.

THANKFUL.

I did receive them so, and then upon
 Presumption played, for which thy pardon's craved.

MALCOLM.

Pray tell what stone you use to make thy wits
 So sharp?

THANKFUL.

None, sir, my parents whetted them
 With sense. What stone hath dulled thine so, a sword
 Thrust in the wars, or cudgelling in brawls?

MALCOLM.

Are they so poorly matched with thine?

THANKFUL.

Nay, but

A man and maid should never match their wits
 Unless in matching his be best.

MALCOLM.

Am I

So worsted by thy tongue?

THANKFUL.

Not by my tongue,
 For tongues are messengers of brains if wise.

MALCOLM.

Then by thy brain?

THANKFUL.

My brain, forsooth: and hath
Anatomy then been thy calling?

MALCOLM.

Nay,
My destiny; for brain that's crowned in gold
And richly set in turquoise blue is find
As rare as beautiful.

THANKFUL.

But many finds
Are not for keeping, sir. And now I fear
Thy dictionary's overcrowded, since
You give your subjects such a host of names.

MALCOLM.

Well then, I pray thee, tell me by what word
You answer aye and nay?

THANKFUL.

By none yet voiced
By thee, for hail of maid to me is wrong;
Yet hadst thou said "good dame" instead, thy wrong
Would just as great have been, Sir Cavalier.

MALCOLM.

Ne'er one nor other—maid nor dame—how lax
A rule you place upon my tongue.

THANKFUL.

But should
You exercise it with such laxity
For days 'twould be both sore and silent as
Thy grave.

MALCOLM.

Thy forte seems riddle-asking now.
"Nor maid nor wife," my faith, 'tis instrument
Sharp edged, without a handle and with point
Concealed.

THANKFUL.

A riddle's made for answer, which
My words they neither ask nor pledge.

THE KING'S ENVOY

MALCOLM.

Well, since
 You seal your lips and lock your hearing up
 Perchance 'tis well for me to crave a way
 From thy direction.

THANKFUL.

On what path have steps
 Of thine been bent?

MALCOLM.

On thine till now, and on
 Some other if they must away.

THANKFUL.

They must,
 For now twilight is night; thou art far from
 Thy journey's end.

MALCOLM.

And thou?

THANKFUL.

I'm where I stop.

MALCOLM.

Alone where beasts and demons may appear?

THANKFUL.

When thou hast taken thy departure, sir,
 I will be safe from both, for man is king
 Of beasts and prince of demons.

MALCOLM.

Such command
 From lips so fair hath greater powers of
 Obedience than sharp drawn swords, but I'm
 Astray and know not which direction are
 The settlements.

THANKFUL.

I'd forgotten thou art
 A stranger, but I fear me, sir, I may
 Not show thy way, for I'm not given to
 A safe directing once the sun falls low.

MALCOLM.

Well then I must away. But, hark, I hear
 A voice.

THANKFUL (*in terror clutches his arm*).

Thou hearest right; they hunt the witch
And 'tis the hunters' cry.

MALCOLM.

Now for thy fears
There must be reason. Is thy riddle thus
Answered: Art thou the witch?

THANKFUL (*in terror*).

I beg thee fix
Upon me no such ban. Am I not free
As beast and bird—that words so horrible
Should after me be called, and hunting done?

MALCOLM.

I ask thy pardon humbly, maid. But night
Is here, thou art alone, confessedly
Not maid nor wife, and with no shelter, yet
Of wond'rous frailty; fairer woman ne'er
Hath graced the world's domain. See how the moon
It lights thy golden hair and points the sweet
Outlines of girlish form.

(*Cry of witch hunters.*)

THANKFUL (*clutching him again*).

'Tis witches' cry.

MALCOLM.

And are you she?

THANKFUL.

So called, by cruel men.
Good sir, but known to no orgies save those
Imposed by church that cast me out.

MALCOLM.

Now have
No fear of scant protection; I'll beside
Thee stand.

THANKFUL.

Away to those of thine not mine.
I have some safety near at hand, Beside,
The hunters now have passed me by, and soon
In fear of witchcraft, will be telling tales
Of brav'ry by their warm firelights. I thank
Thee, sir, and know thee for a gentleman.

Beware thy slender rapier doth not
Find pit against some big bow gun. They are
So handy hereabouts, for in the hands
Of seeming godliness the devil oft
Doth place his keys.

MALCOLM.

Now, since from circumstance
You ask a judgment shaped, I'll so declare:
'Tis women and their children fear the dark,
And some brave men they fear the goblins' hour.
Hence, if not witch, why art thou here alone
In waiting.

THANKFUL.

Trust thy chivalry in my
Behalf; I am as weak and helpless as
E'er woman was.

MALCOLM.

Again thy pardon I
Do crave. In truth my doubts are but my fears
For thee.

THANKFUL.

I do thank thee, good and kind sir,
But hearken and away; 'tis well thou wert
Now gone right speed'ly.

MALCOLM.

Fairest maid, in truth
I fear no human shape and, if thou art
A witch, I fear not thee, so long as thou
Dost keep in such disguise.

THANKFUL.

But, sir, I crave
That thee begone, else consequence write more
Sad chapters to disaster's lengthy tale.

MALCOLM.

I'll not go till I know where safety lies
For thee.

THANKFUL.

In being here alone.

MALCOLM.

If such

Then be the truth, thy saying makes it so.
Why then, I go. Farewell, sweet maid, farewell,

Thine only witchery is in realms of love.

(Starts away)

THANKFUL.

But go not far, these woods are strangely still;

I am a woman, fearful of the dark.

Mind such directions as I give: Be thou

At hand for need, and if no need should be,

Then part from me as gentleman thou art.

MALCOLM.

So be it, yet not so prove to be.

(Stoops and kisses her hand)

THANKFUL.

Haste

Away, find some concealment; someone now comes here.

(Exit MALCOLM. THANKFUL stands in listening attitude. An Indian noiselessly approaches.)

Friend?

MOHAWK.

Fly, friend.

THANKFUL.

Thou didst receive my message with

Dispatch and for thy prompt answer—my—thanks.

MOHAWK.

To me thy runner came ere day was bright,

And he told of new dangers on thy path.

Then through deep forests far toward the North,

With urgent speed that knew not rest nor pause,

The Mohawk came in haste to learn thy will

As straight as flight of wings could lead through air,

As swift as bounding game from hunters near.

Now, maiden, free thy voice—I pause to hear.

THANKFUL.

'Tis weakness bears most of life's knocks and blows,

And, friend, I'm weak from what on me doth fall.

Thou of a people not mine own,

How shamelessly you charge my blood!

What deeds by contrast you beget!

What doubts you flourish, slaying hope!

My blushes come to mortify mine own.

To linger when this tale of wrong be done.

Once from dishonor was I saved,

Now save me since my life is sought;
Thy willing answers to appeal
Should cause the blood of men to leap.

MOHAWK.

Fair maid, with hair of gold, give ear to me.
From far-off lands I journeyed here with thee,
Ten suns with but a single moon, from where
Thy people dwell to where they dwell again,
O'er rivers deep, through clearing and through wood,
From regions where the sun doth longer shine,
And birds have voice above the torrents' crash;
From lands where flowers bloom like many leaves,
And running waters take a warmer touch;
By lodges of the crafty Cherokees,
Then past the tepees of the women-men,
Those shelters of the peaceful Delawares,
From there to here came Mohawk and came maid,
Together with the other, and alone;
Tell me my words run straight as waters fall;
Tell me should truth once stray beyond my call.

THANKFUL.

Each word is painted as by deed it tells.

MOHAWK.

I first saw thee a bird before the storm,
Whose speed was great—whose flight was overlong.
In wild and breathless fear you passed me by,
A fear so blinding dangers were unseen.
And then a voice said: "Mohawk, follow on."
And like upon the hunt thy pace was mine.
Soon weak of limb you trembled and did fall,
Then as the winds told me thy foes drew near
Far back upon thy path I swiftly sped,
To find the men from paleface chiefs pursued;
Who far from thee I led in weary chase
And when the night did fall I sought for thee.
The moon was high, the land was like the rain,
So heavy fell the dew upon the grass;
The trees and bushes they were long asleep
Before I came upon thee lost in dreams.
And when the Autumn night grew chill and cold
I covered thee with freshly-fallen leaves;

And then apart from thee I sat awake
To watch the spirit of the night depart
And leave unto the Manitou of light
A care of thee upon the day to come.
Gray shadows slowly crept from tree to tree,
Until the sun began to paint the sky.
Then you were wakened by some chirping bird
Whose voice was rising from a branch nearby.
A growing wonder filled thine eyes and acts
At covering of soft and downy leaves.
Then, when thou wert free of thy long, deep sleep,
My shadow wandered till it fell thy way;
And having learned thy tongue, I spoke with thee.
Long ere the sun was high, thy fears were gone.
And then you spoke with me—told of thyself;
Of how thy people sold thee to a man
Whose heart was bad—who was thine enemy;
Of how he bought like hatchets and like beads.
In me deep pity then did speak for thee,
And of these paleface settlements I told.
With tears you then implored direction here.
My answer was to lead the way for thee.
Thy mem'ry tells how we met warring bands,
And of how you became a Mohawk squaw
For safety, not for any love of me;
And further of my duty done it speaks.
And now, white maid, be open as the day,
Let shadows have no place in speech with me.
Hast sent for shelter of the Iroquois?
My lonely wigwam knows no woman's voice
And whispers 'neath the silent folds from thee
Would sound as songs of birds in Winter's cold.
Is such to be, or is the journey long?
Unto the French far north beyond the lakes.
I pause to hear. I wait to do thy will.

THANKFUL.

True friend, take me in safety to the French.

MOHAWK.

This moon we start hence, maiden, follow close.

*(Turns sharply and strikes into forest, followed by
Thankful.)*

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE I

Scene: The woods near Tom Mason's cottage which lies just beyond, hidden in the trees.

Time: Between midnight and dawn. In the dark Hector Malcolm comes upon Tom Mason, both draw their swords and enter into combat, in the deep shadows seeing little of each other save the outline of figures. The clink and rasp of steel and ejaculations now and again of the combatants is all that is heard. The fight progresses furiously, when from behind the clouds the moon appears. In its silver light each man sees his antagonist, and as they do, both fall back, but stand upon the defensive.

MASON.

Thou didst put me to stout defense.

MALCOLM.

My faith,

And 'twas offense as much as 'twas defense,

Therefore, like tribute I will pay to thee.

Where was thy voice?

MASON.

He who doth fight in truth
Knows deeds, and lays scant store by talk.

MALCOLM.

Thou shouldst have by some means disclosed thyself.

MASON.

Not so, for when thy sword hath kissed the point
Of one before thee it is not then the time
To make disclosure, lest 'tis vitals of
Thine adversary.

MALCOLM.

Then to kindness of
The moon we owe whole skins, and but for it

One of us might be lying stark and still
 With stiff'ning joints that ne'er would limber to
 The fight again.

*(They sheath swords and approach each other with
 hands outstretched.)*

MASON.

It is well said and now
 Well proven since thine arm so ably wields
 A blade.

MALCOLM.

How quick thou wert in drawing!

MASON.

'Tis

A soldier's habit—called experience:
 Thrust first and question afterward.

MALCOLM.

Aye, true;
 Old wisdom's teaching, too. And soldier thus
 Met soldier, wrist met wrist, and blade a blade.
 I did not look for hand so skillful here.

MASON.

Nor did I count on it, which proves how skill
 And talent lie in unsuspected place.

MALCOLM.

Who art thou?

MASON.

One no better and no worse
 Than any other.

MALCOLM.

Voice and bearing tell
 Of gentility.

MASON.

Oft the voice hath tricks
 Of lying, and the bearing is but what
 Two legs may make of it.

MALCOLM.

Thy tongue and sword
 They thrust and parry well. 'Tis good combine.

MASON.

A tongue and sword are all my property.

MALCOLM.

I'll warrant such was not, when as a babe
Thine eyes didst first see light, but he who'll fence
Identity hath reasons good for it.

MASON.

No question goes beyond its answer, and
Unanswered it counts naught—Inquiry's worth.

MALCOLM.

I take that as well-earned rebuke for an
Unsought uncovering of who thou art.

MASON.

A stranger here thou art, and since so new
To this fair land 'twould be well to tell thee
That here all's future with it no man's past.

MALCOLM.

Well-timed suggestion is a wholesome food.
We will not quibble as to what we be;
The sparks from crossèd metal have bespoke
Two gentlemen.

MASON.

Well said, but even in
Disguise some name must answer call, and mine
Is Mason—Tom, the handle for my friends.

MALCOLM.

And mine is Hector Malcolm.

MASON.

Both good names
That warrant honest wearing should they be
But borrowed for occasion hereabouts.

MALCOLM.

There's trouble in thy midst?

MASON.

Thy comment it
Will fit two ways: to mean the colony,
Or me. If colony you're right. If me,
Assuredly thou art, for meals and me
Have had but scant acquaintanceship of late.

MALCOLM.

Thy wit it keeps a pace with skillful speech.

MASON.

Man's speech's a passport where his habits are
Unknown, and wit is useless when not sharp
Upon occasion for employing it.

MALCOLM.

Return you to the settlements?

MASON.

Aye, man,
Beyond I have a cabin; waiting there
A worthy dame, who for two years hath much
Enjoyed my name.

MALCOLM.

I understood thy sword
And tongue were all thy property.

MASON.

Well, then,
Thy understanding fitted to the fact:
A wife is not a property to me.

MALCOLM.

A companion?

MASON.

Aye, for some temper and
Distress; a sort of balm that heals thy hurts
Then tears the bandage so no cure may be.

MALCOLM.

What have we here? Some shadows tell approach.

MASON.

When husband, if perchance thou art not such
By now, thy wedding primer it will teach
That all thy solace is another's.

(*Enter MAGGIE, followed by DICK*).

MAGGIE.

Here

At last my weary limbs hath led aright.
What now? Why hast thou been so long away?

MASON.

Hath it been long since we were parted?

MAGGIE.

Long?

'Twas ere sundown.

DICK.

Aye, and I called to thee
Before the moon was up.

MASON

'Twas folly, since
The night air's harmful to the beauty of
Thy voice. (*To MAGGIE*) I thought I would here rest
awhile.

MAGGIE.

Must rest forever be arrest to stay
Thy progress?

MASON.

Nay, good wench, there's less of youth
In me than any time before.

MAGGIE.

You mean
The ginger in thy blood hath lost its fire.
By faith, I'd say 'twas never so possessed.

MASON.

Addicted is thy tongue to wag. Sometimes
In sleep I dream it takes a kindly tone,
But waking tells how sleep deceives.

MAGGIE.

But sleep
Will ne'er deceive thee, lad, till thou hast failed
To wake, and even then, perchance, thou wilt
Have cheated Purgatory by its use.

MASON.

As maid was it said of thee that thy words
Were pointed many ways and sharp upon
All sides?

MAGGIE.

I was accounted to be sweet-
Dispositioned, and ere my teens were by
'Twas said no comelier a wench e'er graced
A ribboned petticoat.

MASON.

'Twas sad mistake,
For when thou wert among expectancies
'Tis certain much dispute was held ere they
Gave thee to be of womankind. But hold,

I ask thy pardon, Mistress Mason, and
 You, too, good Master Hector Malcolm, for
 My long absence of manners. Wife, here is
 A gentleman who asks to meet with thee—
 One known to me—a swordsman of fine skill
 And marked ability.

MALCOLM (*bowing low*).

How much of grace

And beauty hath old England lost unto
 Her colonies.

MAGGIE.

This land of ours is crude

With much that takes no polish.

(*They talk alone together.*)

MASON (*to DICK*).

On thy guard

In tongue and act. A swordsman you will meet.

DICK (*agitated*).

As friend? As friend?

MASON.

I trust observance of

This warning will so prove.

DICK.

I'd rather not.

Indeed, I'd rather not.

MASON.

And bring upon

Thyself a speedy challenge. Stand you here,

I'm wary in approaching him. Beware

Offense! Good Master Malcolm, here I have

A gifted wit and singer who doth crave

To meet with thee; by name he's known here as

One Richard Fellows. By close friends and those

Who know the point of chat: "That fellow Dick."

MALCOLM.

I'll take him for a merry comrade since

A song is pleasing to my ears, and wit

Begets the laugh's conception.

THE KING'S ENVOY

DICK (*attentively*).

Good, aye, good;
Indeed 'tis good. (*To MASON*) Aye, better than I
thought
He'd say.

MASON (*laughs heartily*).
Now did I not name right.

MAGGIE.

Thou art
A very devil in thy torments.

MALCOLM.

Fun

Hath many species.

MASON.

Dick, I would some song
Should fall upon the evening air.

DICK.

My voice——

MASON.

Is rarely beautiful.

MAGGIE.

Enough of this.

The night is nearly gone and eating's in
Next order lest perchance no breakfast serves.

MASON.

Nay, but short space of time ago, my friend
Here saw from look of me that trouble was
Felt in my midst.

MAGGIE.

If trouble would then find
Relief 'tis well you start for it.

MASON (*to DICK*).

Hast thou

A stomach for a meal, good fellow, Dick?

DICK.

My hunger is away from me.

MASON.

That's bad;

But better than thy meal to leave.

MALCOLM.

If sharp

Discourse prove title to sharp appetite
Then ample hunger hath been provided.

MASON.

Come thou with me.

MALCOLM.

I will, and thankful, too.

'Twas sunrise when I came from ship ashore.
She made thy harbour in the night and cleared
For southern ports when land was found for me.
Arrival showed things much disturbèd here,
And thus I left my lodging late to find.
So now I ask thy kind direction to
Some comfort and some cheer.

MASON.

If willing, these

Lean hours left of night abide with me
Not longer, for in early morning we
Away, even so, cabin will be thine
For use and with it much welcome from two
Late occupants.

MALCOLM.

Thou art a comrade in
All certainty, and if good wife of thine
Doth not object, this honor I'll accept.

MAGGIE.

My husband's guest thou art, and since you ask
I will right gladly say mine, too.

MASON.

Note how

Accord doth fit in marriage now and then.
A wager would I place with thee, that did
I ask the Gov'nor of our Colony
To stay the night with me, she would bid him
Away and close and bar the door on him
And me.

MAGGIE.

Aye, that I would, upon the both
Of ye, but with this difference: for him
There'd be some punishment of kind I can

Inflict, for woman's tongue's a weapon feared,
If in the mouth of healthy-tempered lass.

MASON.

If voucher's wanted for the last of that
I will that voucher be.

MALCOLM.

Such words I count
Severe indictment. Since so general in
Their scope. I'm glad I have no residence
About.

MASON.

How now, where is that fellow Dick?
I fear his shyness hath led to some close
Concealment in a bush near by. (*Calls*) Ho, Dick!
Ho, Dick! He's gone. A timid genius, to
Be sure.

MALCOLM.

Before I go with thee I'd learn
Thy position upon a matter of
Some moment here.

MASON.

Thy question, man; voice it,
Since hearing doth no answer make.

MALCOLM.

Two sides
Are sharply drawn in community here.
Dost thou believe in witches?

MASON.

There is scant
Wisdom at variance with times of which
Our lives are part.

MALCOLM.

Spar not in words, good friend,
Thou art in truth an honest fellow, straight
Of speech, and ready in the use of arms;
And, furthermore, thou hast a soldier been.

MASON.

What have fair words to do with thoughts? Dost seek
To mould mine by a use of them? If so,
Thou art of grave mistake. My years have known

Too many moultings, and thereby I have
Been taught.

MALCOLM.

But simple declarations asked
That you may fashion by a single eye
Or nay?

MASON.

On those two words doth all depend.
Therefore thou couldst not ask for more.

MALCOLM.

Well, since

You show such reticence, I will be free
In speech with thee. I met near to this spot
A maid accused of witchcraft, truth 'twas charge
Most vilely made, for she's a comely and
An honest lass—of direct eye and speech,
Without a single trace of malice nor
Ungodly wickedness. She left here with
A savage and bid me as gentleman
Make no attempt to follow her.

MASON.

Thy words
They bring some peace and much alarm. We seek
The maid at dawn—my dame and I—and to
These savage villages we wend our way.
The maid she is no witch nor hath she such
Evil habits as those charged against her
Court this day.

MALCOLM.

You start a quest of her?

MASON.

Aye, such is my intent.

MALCOLM.

I'll go with thee.

MASON.

I fear me 'twould be dangerous.

MAGGIE.

Hold! Dost

Remember wish when first departure of
The maiden Thankful came to thee, and much
Before 'twas made so necessary?

MASON.

Aye,

I know. I would have taken cowl and donned
The cassock of a Jesuit priest. Then gone
With this poor, lonely girl upon her way
As some protection and her safety.

MAGGIE.

Right.

And then I pointed out the dangers of
Thee being recognized.

MALCOLM.

I catch the drift:

You think it would be safer for the maid
In savage comp'ny such as she's now in
If one were by, who in religious garb
Could serve as protector? Let me, then, don
This cowl and cassock of which thou dost speak,
And with you go unto these savage men,—
Thy neighbors—and see what may there be done
To help the maid.

MASON.

Thou art more comrade than

I did suppose, and if thy calling can
So speed'ly take thee here and there, I see
No reason why thou shouldst not come with us
In such disguise as best the purpose of
Occasion fits.

MAGGIE.

I will get thee a cowl

And cassock made for him (*Nods toward MASON*). Then
by sun-up
We'll leave this place. (*Pause.*) To me as woman,
comes

A question, Master Malcolm: whence springs this—
Thy interest?

MALCOLM.

'Tis given woman's sight

To see where men are blind, and thus I fear
The thoughts within my heart are known to thee
Ere they delivery found to her for whom
Intended.

MASON (*starting toward cabin*).

Since the night does travel on
And hunger grows no less, 'tis well we should
Away from here to eat. Then make our start.

(*Exit, followed by MAGGIE and MALCOLM. Enter
CALVERT and BRAINERD*).

CALVERT.

My faith, but silence holds the cottage tight,
Albeit I heard some voices near to here.

BRAINERD.

Aye, thoughts such time o' night they come to men.
I deem this prowling late enough. Away
To rest and win repose for work, I say.

CALVERT.

And since the morrow brings the hunt again
About our heels, perchance now thou art right.

BRAINERD.

What stirred His Excellency's wrathly state?
The tongue of Maggie Mason, was that it,
Or tidings of newcomers in our midst?

CALVERT.

The Governor is much angered by act
So careless of his dignity as this,
The stranger lands and with no more ado
He makes away. To where nobody knows.
Beyond the truth our eyes do tell—he's gone.

BRAINERD.

A most disturbing day and night as well.

CALVERT.

Aye, little rest is found when actions such
As these we cope with are about. Now then,
Who could the stranger be? Those who saw him
Give varying report. Some, that he's large
Of limb and others call him youthful aged.

BRAINERD.

For me, I'd say he was a gentleman.
By bearing given to command. Perchance
A soldier from the King, or envoy from
A sister colony, the Dutch or French.

CALVERT.

Hast heard him speak?

BRAINERD.

I know him but in sight.

CALVERT.

Then may he be a spy upon us here
From Frontenac, who contemplates attack
With hordes of Indians—allies of France.

BRAINERD.

If of some dignity and consequence
Lack of reception may be his complaint.
For when he came ashore no one was there,
Despite the show of state in ship and him.

CALVERT.

Aye, such may be. Accursed business, this,
Our trial of the witch. I like it not.
To break the bones or burn the form of one
Three score in years or more is not so bad
A punishment to those who execute,
But when 'tis frail and tender maid, as fair
And blithesome girl as e'er is seen, why, then
Man's blood doth curdle at the thought of it.

BRAINERD.

Let duty guide, 'tis not for thee or me
To pave suggestion's way.

CALVERT.

That's as may be.

The sword inflicts the hurt a wrist directs,
It parts the flesh and feels the vitals' touch.
On it the gushing blood doth well. 'Tis now
Not so—verdict of death for thee or me
To execute. The battle's deed agrees
With men, but here revolt it stirs protest.

BRAINERD.

Well, let's away ere dawn finds us about.

CALVERT.

I'd give some lib'ral bushels of good corn
To know the mischief Mason's hatched. 'Tis some
I'll warrant thee.

BRAINERD.

And safe in warrant be.

(*Exit* CALVERT and BRAINERD.)

(*Enter* Malcolm in cowl and cassock, followed
by MASON.)

MALCOLM (*looking toward settlement*).

See how abode of men in slumber lies,
A dark and somber restfulness that breeds
Some troubles for the day yet sleeping here.
A small assemblage on a dangerous shore
Made of stout men and stouter womankind,
From these few here a nation is to grow;
For men who reared this settlement are prone
To clear these woods and plow and plant these hills.

MASON (*calling in door*).

Good wife, beware thy show of light;
No doubt some watchers are abroad.

MAGGIE (*from within*).

If they're about they'll find me hard
In head and hand and arm. I have
Some humor now for fight, my man,
My tongue it has no harness on.

MALCOLM.

It takes the courage of a woman to
Make man—she is life's heroine.

MASON (*in protest*).

I like

The fray that voice of purpose does not still,
But here I like the robe of caution best.

MALCOLM (*banteringly*).

There speaks the captain to his soldier men,
But soldiers of his kind; for should they be
Weak women, why, he'd be without command.

MASON.

You jest with life as spark with powder plays.

MALCOLM.

Life holds three jests, three sorrows and three joys.

MASON.

I'd count them larger numbered, by my faith.

MALCOLM.

Then would you give and take beyond thy right.
 For he who gives too much is kind of thief;
 We are most free to meet and prone to praise,
 Forgetful of the robber hand that steals
 Us from ourselves by giving what is won.

MASON

What devious and ungen'rous ways you point.
 Name life's three jests, three sorrows and three joys.

MALCOLM.

First of life's playful jests man knows no birth
 Save that he's born.
 For proof of mother must he take a word,
 In father's name he hazards even more.
 The second of the three in life is mere
 Uncertainty.
 He builds, he strives, he sleeps, he dreams, he wakes,
 His name, his fortune and his goal but death.
 The third and last is merriest of all . . .
 And called mem'ry.
 'Tis widows clothed in fashion's late decree,
 And deeds enrobèd with forgetfulness;
 Thus are three royal jests portrayed to thee,
 By birth, by death and then by memory.

MASON

Well said, for jests; now for their counterpart.

MALCOLM.

First, sorrow takes a hard and beaten course
 Of suffering;
 Not pain to self, for that is easily borne,
 But hurts we have no power to assuage,
 Exactions of that grim usurer, Death,
 That promise naught;
 The us'rer takes, but ne'er hath he returned,
 Purloiner of the hopes in child and age,
 And then the backward glance on ways gone by,
 Condemnations.
 The roses strewn about and trampled on,
 The deeds uncovered by a life with them;
 There see you cruel sorrow sad enough,
 And all's contain'd 'mongst the sombre three.

MASON

Well said, for sorrow and for jest; where come
Thy truant joys—they're never last with me.

MALCOLM.

First joy is childhood with its lack of care,
Oblivious
To all save appetite and weariness.
Well paid by pleasure of each living hour.
Then comes that sweeter youthful touch called love;
Expectancy.
A warmth that tingles till soul fires burn,
An ache of joy, from fondness in the hurt;
And last the ripened fruits of love—the arc
Of parentage.
The mother-bed where others spring to life;
The throne of nature's own eternity.
Those are the three and only joys of life:
Innocence, love, unending creation.

MASON

You pay some tribute to the ways of love
As by the father and the mother hand
Of man brought round to fit a world's intent.

MALCOLM.

A king, a realm and subjects, heritage
Ne'er hath confined, nor battled heroes made
Alone by val'rous deed of great acclaim.
Vicissitudes of day and clime are they,
For there's a crown—a sovereign's own to man
A gift of gen'rous hand—of parenthood,
Each tiny group for lords of love to sway,
While hope in myriads with them all doth play.
(Enter MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE.

How much of clatt'ring chatter hath all men;
Just cackle, cackle, cackle like the hen.

MASON

Thy tongue's a hatch'ry for all hens in one.

MALCOLM.

Well said, Dame Mason, mind him not.
He plucks thy query for reply.

MASON

Now we'll away and make distance
On this a doubtful quest we take.

(They start. MASON and MAGGIE exit.)

MALCOLM *(pauses, looks at eastern sky)*.

See now the night wears but a silver thread,

Yea, and unrobed 'tis naked for the bed.

The day is quick'ning in the womb of dawn

And we must be astir ere it be born.

The vanquished stars they pale a yellow gray

As one by one they seek some bank of cloud.

The sun is kind to friend and enemy;

The moon has whims and tells not who 'tis for.

(He follows. Exit.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE II

*Scene: The edge of an Indian village of the Pequots.
Tepees showing in the distance.*

Time: One week later. Hour near to twilight.

THANKFUL.

I am most sorely grieved and much beset,
If 'twere not for such friends as thee and thine
I fear I would not longer burden time.

MAGGIE.

Sweet lass, be of good cheer; so foul and base
A suspicion will find a fitting end,
For 'twill recoil upon its origin.

THANKFUL.

My years are few, and when so multiplied
By trouble, 'tis but nat'ral that I should
Be of such little heart; in truth I am
More girl than woman.

MAGGIE.

Aye, and when thou hast
A ready tear to shed, come with it then
To me, and when it falls 'twill fall with mine
In company, my arms enfolding thee.
Think of me as thy sister, since I have
Not age sufficient for the sweeter name
Of mother.

THANKFUL.

Truly, loving sister thou,
And thought so sweet brings burning tears to fill
My eyes I scarce can see—How reddened they
By weeping be.

MAGGIE.

Dear lass, 'tis naught beyond
 The greater brightness which, unshed, thy tears
 They bring. Come thou to me to weep, and, while
 I may not join in sadness, yet I will
 In tears—since tears are such good tonic for
 A woman's spirits, whether high or low.

THANKFUL.

And, Maggie, thou wilt not leave me alone
 To combat with these fears and doubts that make
 Most horrid nightmares, both in light and dark?
 Indeed, I cannot bear it with but self,
 I am so helpless, and in such sad state.

MAGGIE.

By thee I'll stand as only woman can
 Until protection comes to thee such as
 Doth emanate from strong-armed, tender heart
 Of man.

THANKFUL.

And wilt thou do all this for me,
 True friend? Mind not my tears, for now I weep
 More happily than ever had I thought
 Might be.

MAGGIE.

But dry thy tears, dear lass, here comes
 This way a chieftain of the savages.

(Enter CHIEF, followed by MASON.)

CHIEF.

The white squaw of the Mohawk she will come
 To Council talk when sun with day is done.

*(Exit CHIEF.)*MASON *(to Thankful)*.

Now, as thou art to go this night before
 The Council, Mistress Thankful, some event
 Of unusual import hath transpired
 Since noon. You bide here with my Maggie. Nay,
 For since the Reverend Father comes this way
 'Tis well, good wife, for thee to follow me.

MAGGIE.

Remember words I said: I love thee, lass,
 As would I sister of my parents' blood.

THANKFUL.

To me thy words a sweet affection tell—
 As golden bands that do remake some part
 Of life's old fond desire. Dear sister, be
 Not long away.

MAGGIE.

Nay, fear not, for I will
 Return with quick dispatch to thee, dear lass.
(They embrace. Exit MAGGIE. Enter MIS-
 SIONARY.)

THANKFUL.

Thou art a holy man, as free of self
 As gems are free of flaws. I would have speech
 With thee, most Reverend Sir. I crave advice
 In matters of some deep import to me,
 And ask thy sympathy to comfort me.

MISSIONARY.

We never free ourselves of self, my child.

THANKFUL.

Hast thou always been of such priestly thought,
 Inclined to church and garbed in holy clothes?

MISSIONARY.

Nay, daughter, since the priest from childhood grows
 And spends some years as boy and youth,
 He's not by habit holily inclined;
 These garments mark a man's estate.

THANKFUL.

It was a foolish question, sir; I know
 Not why I asked it of thee; since I did,
 A plea for pardon follows—grant it me?

MISSIONARY.

A foolish question's not always
 As foolish as it seems. My child,
 Deception is a ripened fruit
 Of every season and all states.

THANKFUL.

Wilt thou thy sympathy then give to me?

MISSIONARY.

My heart is open to thee, child,
 Whatever solace and comfort

Thou art in most need of I will
Make good attempt at some present
Deliverance, with help of God.

THANKFUL.

My mind is burdened by a secret weight.

MISSIONARY.

And dost thou want to speak of it to me?

THANKFUL.

Aye, father, and 'tis of my past I'd speak.

MISSIONARY.

A most real direction from whence
Our burdens come. Be only free
As heart and candor will permit.

THANKFUL.

With priest I never thought a limit held,
'Twas my belief a command of all truth
Prevailed, no matter what its meaning be.
Yet thou hast left my heart for arbiter
And maiden's modest candor for its voice.

MISSIONARY.

My child, the office of confessor is
For those of faith, and thou art not of it.

THANKFUL.

Thy creed, good father, and the creed I know
Are two, not one, as God they worship; so
A ray of Christian kindness rests upon
Thy brow, and thus in deep humility
I pray you tell me what religion is.

MISSIONARY.

My child, religion is the foil for life,
Its sins are many as the sins we bear,
Its blessings but the weight of self-content.
Its power is its purpose; never made
To travel true to time's intent, and thus
'Tis woman's best accomplishment, and man's
Occasionment. In truth, 'tis cloak that makes
Some wearers good, and some the worse for wear.

THANKFUL.

Be my protector, friend in churchly garb.

MISSIONARY.

As friend I will console with thee.
Such comfort as I may bestow
Was won before appeal. Tell this
Ill happening that befell thee.

THANKFUL.

It is concerning marriage, sir.

MISSIONARY.

I feared as much, since from the turning of
The second seventh year in woman's life
Her thoughts in marriage channels mostly run.

THANKFUL.

I know not whether I'm a maid or wife.
'Tis doubt that carries great depression here. (*Touches
bosom.*)

MISSIONARY.

'Tis of surpassing strangeness hard to solve:
With woman marriage is of such moment that
It breeds no forgetfulness, yet you speak
To tell the rule's exception. Now proceed.

THANKFUL.

It was a sort of marriage.

MISSIONARY.

Strange. A sort
Of marriage, say you? Was it solemnized?

THANKFUL.

Yes, by odd rites I could not comprehend.

MISSIONARY.

They must have been most truly strange, if thou—
The bride—didst in their comprehension fail.

THANKFUL.

How prone thou art to puncture story with
Comment. 'Tis at some variance with what
I'd thought thy holy office promised me.

MISSIONARY.

A habit of the monastery. Long
Absence from women and the world renders
These questions necessary. Now I may

Approach with thee this subject of comfort
And happiness. But be assured we are
Without the church in such a performance.

THANKFUL.

Aye, but thy holy words can point a way
Beyond my difficulties prompted by
Disinterest.

MISSIONARY.

My child, man's interest
Is ever an unprovèd instrument.
Proceed with telling of thy tale, since tale
It is, and stranger tale I've never heard.

THANKFUL.

I fled from England, that I might escape
A guardian of over zeal, who would
Have wedded me without mine own consent;
I little knew that when I shipped 'twas for
Acceptance as a wife by some distant
Virginia colonist, at voyage's end,—
A vile, untamèd wretch. He bid for me,
The highest price, and I was sold to him.
Then, being fleet of foot, I made escape,
And by the aid a noble Indian
Did give to me, I was unharmed. He led
Me to my countrymen and women here,
But on the way 'twas necessary to
Become his squaw to save from being made
A captive in a tribe we passed. By some
Strange rites of savage nature, this I did.
Yet, holy father, never have my lips
Been sullied by a kiss. I am a maid.

MISSIONARY.

There is much sadness in what you tell me,
And pity stirs my heart as man who's not
A holy father of the church, but just
A simple citizen.

THANKFUL.

But 'tis as such
I ask this most strange ceremony's weight.
Doth it bind me, or is it an event

Of no great moment save as misfortune's
Instrument—sad-resulting incident
Demanding most unusual remedy?

MISSIONARY.

Fair maid, put heart at rest, expedient
Such as thou hast employed was called to thee
By danger—necessary for thine own
Preservation and without harm to thee.
'Tis not considered by the church to be
Of binding power, and you are thus free
To wed as I would be should sombre gown
Fall from my shoulders, leaving man alone.

THANKFUL.

What strange new lightness words such as these bring
My heart.

MISSIONARY.

Why for? Is there then someone who
Hath set a siege upon its truancy?

THANKFUL.

No, father, no, but in the week I saw
A youth of noble carriage which bespoke
A soldier and a courtier, who showed,
On occasion, a most becoming and
A gallant chivalry. His name, I know
It not, since he is stranger to these parts.
Nor am I like to see his face again.
But, having mem'ry of a meeting once,
I must now find a maidenly content.

MISSIONARY.

Was he a largish man, one given to
Loud talk and bluster?

THANKFUL.

Nay, of such a one
No second thought would come, even had there
Been first.

MISSIONARY.

Perchance then 'twould be right to style
Him as one given to the use of frills
And powders, sweetly-scented,
Prettily adorned with lace, bejewelled with the gems

Of India, of softened voice; a man
By shape, a woman by comparison.

THANKFUL.

No—ten thousand noes. Thy first had more of
A woman's preference, yet neither hit
The mark, nor come they even near to it.

MISSIONARY.

Hast thou known love?

THANKFUL.

No, never; yet I may
Be learning now. The woods they talk to me,
And as child I heard that they are still
To all save lovers' ears. Is that a truth?
Can you, good father, tell me aught of love?

MISSIONARY.

'Twill unravel thoughts to think on:
Slender as a spider weaving
Webs across a cottage ceiling,
Gauzy paths for those unwary,
Tripping nets for those who hurry
Through the stiles of thoughtless duty.
Some say love always dies early,
Else turns sour growing surly.

THANKFUL.

'Tis pretty speech, more courtier's than priest's.

MISSIONARY.

I would hear more about this stranger man.

THANKFUL.

Good, sir, he's clever, gifted with fine speech,
And courtly manner, having graces kings
Take most by compliment to high estate.

MISSIONARY.

How much bright eyes and curly tresses make
In airs—when comes to talk with them—the poise,
The sighs, the laugh if beauty be in teeth,
The smile if otherwise. Ah, but 'tis sweet
And fair in place, if sad in consequence. (*Short pause.*)
Thy tale's a tricky one that finds much of
Romantic interest even to priest,

The callous churchman that I may not be.
 Fair maid, my holy office calls for strict
 Admonishment to thee—now tell thy heart
 To keep no company with thine eyes unless
 Perchance this stranger doth appear and prove
 To be well worthy of some thought from thee.
 And then indite within thy mem'ry strong
 Image of him to bar forgetfulness,
 For since thou hast thus seen in him a trait
 Of manly comeliness, 'tis certain that
 He saw in thee such charms of womanhood
 As will bring him to where thou art again.

THANKFUL (*rapturously*).

Say you so?

MISSIONARY.

Aye, and more.

THANKFUL.

Then if 'tis of
 Like tenor, with a sweet import, the same
 I pray thee to continue, for my ears
 They thirst for it.

MISSIONARY.

So would I might, but now
 There comes one of the savage people here:
 A woman of the forest-men, our friends.

THANKFUL.

See me then soon again, for talk with thee
 Alone brings peace to me. On topic of
 This stranger thy discourse I like to hear.
 Now, father, ere you go, bless me, and if
 'Tis possible, then, good sir, bless him too.

MISSIONARY.

Thy sweet innocence merits blessings it
 Were sacrilege for me to now bestow;
 But as plain man, beyond the pale of church,
 You have them all, sweet maid, and he as well.
 But his they come from thee and not from me.

THANKFUL.

Indeed I thank thee, Father, and I thank
 Thy holy calling which made speech so free.

MISSIONARY.

I thank it, too, fair maid; and now adieu.

(*Exit* MISSIONARY. *Enter* INDIAN MAID.

THANKFUL *watches retreating* MISSIONARY.)

THANKFUL.

How strange a priest is he: were I to pick
His calling 'twould ne'er be a cowl and gown.
He'd wear but mailèd shirt and plumes. His hand
Well gauntleted, and skilled in all the arts
Of which broad sword and rapier are parts.
Perhaps it is a manly figure in
Mine eyes that I too freely do endow.
Ah, Holy Church, what sweet comfort you bring!

(*Turning to Indian Maid who has stood watching her.*)

Hast thou some of the paleface speech,
And art thou here to talk with me?

INDIAN MAID.

Hark, Yellow Bird, thy words of talk
My father he hath taught to me,
And since I may so speak with thee
Hear now my voice with open ears!
A Mohawk brave of mighty clan
In far-off harvest moon came here.
He came before the leaves were gone,
And his companion was a maid
From distant paleface settlements
Near where the Chippewas abide.
He loved the maid, yet she left him
And unto her own people went.
Her wigwam of the fallen trees
On forest edge he then would watch.
In tribe where tepee of his stood
There lived a Narragansett maid
The Sachem's child by choice, not blood.
She greatly loved the Mohawk brave.
To her the clean-limbed warrior
Was both a man and Manitou;
His eyes were brighter than the stars
And when they did fall upon her
Their dark depths almost stayed her heart,
So wildly it would beat with love.

She watched the maid with sun-lit hair,
And hate like weeds grew in her heart:
A hate of vengeful, grim intent
To steal by night upon the maid
And thrust a knife into her breast,
So like the snow in pale moonlight.
Twice tried she, but each time she failed.
First, it was some palefaces watched,
Who with great swiftness ran t'ward her;
The Mohawk then upon his guard,
Did grasp her ere the door was swung
And on the pain of instant death
A promise forced from 'tween her lips.
Yet hatred in her never slept,
And where the paleface cattle grazed
She sprinkled grass with poison herbs.
Then cried she shrilly through the woods,
Far in the still of silent night,
And fearsome tokens scattered she
Of some bad medicine about—
All this she did, and more, much more.
For sickness 'mongst palefaces fell;
Their drinking springs she touched with death,
Then watched to see the maid fall low.
But mornings saw her up at dawn,
And evenings safe to rest again.
Yet others, babes and weaker ones,
Were reached till fear ran high, and then
For thee the witches' cry was raised,
And from the woods I heard with joy.
White maid, you've heard the maid of red
Her story of jealousy tell.
Thy people come for thee to burn:
My father will give thee to them,
But if thou wilt away from him,
The Mohawk warrior I love,
Then will I help thee to escape.
To save thyself the pain of death
Answer: wilt thou away or stay?
Wilt thou take him from her who loves,
Or leave him here for her to win?
Once only will I speak for peace.

THANKFUL (*After some silence*).
What deep villainy is a part of thee!
The devil thou hast put to shame by deeds
Most dastardly. I see and know now why
I was adjudged a witch, and proven so.

INDIAN MAID.

I may not kill thee now, but go
Within the woods and I will kill
Thee then. His arm will not protect
In safety for always. And then,
When thou art dead, I'll comfort him.
I hate thee, hate thee, hate thee, hate!

(*Interrupted by approach of MOHAWK. Exit
speedily and noiselessly into woods at back.
Enter MOHAWK.*)

MOHAWK.

I come for thee. The Council waits.
Now follow me.

(*He turns about sharply, striking path on which
he came.*)

THANKFUL.

I follow thee. (*She follows him.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE I

*Scene: An Indian Council in a village of the Pequots.
Sachem and warriors seated about Council fire.
High hills showing toward back; smoke signal shown
thereon; as darkness falls signal fires take their place.*

*Time: Same day from twilight until near dawn. Enter
MOHAWK and MISTRESS THANKFUL.*

MOHAWK (*to* SACHEM).

Sachem of the Pequots:

Look on squaw of Mohawk.

SACHEM (*to* MOHAWK).

Take thou a place in council here,
We would both smoke and talk with thee;
Bid squaw there stand by tallest tree
Beyond where signal fires now burn.

MOHAWK (*to* MAID).

Maid, by tree here stand. Be still and quiet,
Yet if bid to speak, then speak thee freely;
Fear naught with me here. I am a Mohawk.

(*Enter* MISSIONARY.)

WAR CHIEF (*to* SACHEM).

Why comes the wearer of black gowns among us?
Is this palefaces' talk or red men's council.

SACHEM (*to* MISSIONARY).

My lodge is open for thy comfort.
My squaws will now attend upon thee.

MISSIONARY (*to* SACHEM).

I would be with this maiden of my people;
If she attends thy council then so would I.

SACHEM (*to* MISSIONARY).

She's a woman of the Mohawks,
Iroquois, and of such people.

MISSIONARY (*to SACHEM*).

No blood is changed that meets not other blood.
 Yon maiden, virt'ous, chaste and innocent,
 Is not a Mohawk. She's a paleface girl.
 And my rough cheeks were kissed by light the same.
 Thus, noble Pequot Sachem, here I stand,
 To leave when she accompanies me, else stay.

WAR CHIEF (*to SACHEM*).

Bold defiance, that like
 The wind doth hit the face.
 What, Sachem, is thy will?
 Now let thy words be strong.

SACHEM (*to MISSIONARY*).

Black gown, we give to thee good will,
 You freely come without hindrance,
 And thou art free to go thy way
 In tepees of our villages;
 Both food and drink are offered thee;
 And mats are laid in all for rest;
 We greet and welcome thee a friend;
 This Council it, as hath been said,
 Is for red men, their ears alone;
 Go thou, in peace, and leave us so.

(Chorus from Council circle.)

Go-hah.* Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah.

MISSIONARY (*to SACHEM*).

Hear, friends, learn how my Manitou
 Hath spoken unto me in dreams,
 For often hath it sternly said:
 "Ne'er leave a woman of thy race
 Beyond the sound her voice may make,
 Or ready reaches of thine own."
 And, while not fearing safety here,
 I obey dreams sent unto me.

SACHEM (*to MISSIONARY and COUNCIL*).

Such command we must not defy,
 Since dreams are not the will of man.
 Thus stand by Mohawk squaw, black gown,
 And words that should not reach thine ears

* Applause.

We'll drown in sound of rumbling toms.
Let those with toms come nearer by.

(Tom beaters appear.)

WAR CHIEF (*to COUNCIL*).

A walk from time of sun-up till it's high
Above thy heads and gives unto the trees
No shadow, carries where white men have reared
Their wigwams made of branches and tree trunks.
There have they planted maize to garner yield.
From covered spots thou hast seen them both come
And go, and from afar the swinging knife
Hath brought to thee the sound that tells the death
Of trees—the hiss of mighty giants who fall
Where they long stood, to lie forever low;
Those in whose shade thy fathers oft have stood.
This is a truth of truths and in the hearts
Of all who hear there's none to say me nay.
As wind at evening stills, I pause to hear. (*Short pause.*)
At first it was few trees that sheltered game
Our fathers hunted, fell before those knives
Palefaces use. Now, many are no more,
And from each dying tree a voice it calls
To me, and in them all I see the life
Of ye, my people, ebbing fast away.
Two suns from here toward the great salt seas
We find palefaces plentiful as leaves
That cover paths in harvest moon, and yet
I've heard old men in council speak when youth
Was mine, as now I speak to thee, of time
When no palefaces' tepee rested by
The rivers or upon the crests of hills.
Then came some few weak ones. We made them friends.
So poor were these, they hungered for our grain:
We gave it them. Then brought they more from lands
Beyond the sun, as these will bring more here.
My brothers, now the light is bright, we see
Decision in the starless sky, not when
Dark night it comes to bring us heavy sleep.
Then let us choose from 'mongst our brave young men
A band of warriors to fall upon
The lodges these palefaces build near here.

It is the will of Manitou we do;
The hand that's raised to steal, should from the arm
Be cut. The man who takes that not his own,
Should travel by the path of death and stand
Before great Manitou. Hear him say "thief."
I pause, my brothers; you have heard me speak.

(Loud chorus from Council circle.)

Go-hah, go-hah, go-hah, go-hah, go-hah.

SACHEM *(to Council)*.

Brothers of my race:

I rise to speak; let ears drink of my words,
And when we part let minds then dwell with them.
This council fire sends light from hill to hill,
It tells our brothers living in those lands
Of longer sun that we are now astir;
That hands are eager for the tomahawk,
That anger rises not as smoke, but like
The tree with deep'ning root and spreading branch.

Brothers, listen more:

Thy fathers' fathers they were young with me;
I'm old upon the hunt and old in war,
At many council fires I've been heard,
And many times my voice hath called for war.
Great battles know my moccasins' imprint,
Great treaties have I been a party to,
To me palefaces all are enemies;
My kindness once to them found no return.

Brothers, joy is here. *(Touches heart.)*

Ye look on age with reverence, so that
Thy children and thy children's children see
And learn their ways from thee. I now rejoice
At silence which attends my talk with thee.
Each word it springs as from thy fathers' time,
It gives their voice, long still, an echo here,
And they are glad I live thus on to speak
And picture now their will, and show their hearts.
Brothers, take ye heed.

The tree it lifts its head unto the sky.

Its growing branches reach out many ways;
The new near top, the old near root, in shade
And shelter of the younger limbs above,

Which shield the old and rise to protect them;
Even the fallen limb tells where it lived.
We read this as a tribute to man's age.
And thus we think as nature thinks for him.
Brothers, now attend.
The just are greater than the kind. The man
First just, then kind, will pay before he gives.
But ask not how ye may be just. No way
Is pointed save what comes to you alone.
'Tis like the air you breath, one minute here,
And then forever gone beyond recall.
All this I say so words that follow now
May take the seed from which true justice grows.
Brothers, hear with care.
The Chieftain's voice hath kindl'd fires here;
His words ring deep in mine own aged ears.
But an echo it calls as well and says:
When man begins, he seldom sees an end,
To listen thus is hark'ning to wise talk
Which further tells the dangers of much haste,
And shows how wars like fires start with sparks.
One light'ing blaze for glory, one for warmth.
Brothers, follow close.
From paleface settlements strong words now come.
They claim a maiden of their people here.
One of bad medicine. They ask for her.
The Mohawk says this maid she is his squaw,
That she hath been his now these many moons,
And yet the Mohawk's tepee is not here;
He doth not hunt for her, nor doth she make
For him new leggins and new moccasins.
Brothers, here reflect.
Now shall we war to save this maid, or break
No bond of peace to keep from punishment?
The paleface chief's demand we may deny,
But blood will flow and battle rage around.
The tree of peace spreads branches overhead,
The clouds of war they give but little shade,
And shade is good for age and good for youth.
I speak for peace. Let me thy voices hear.

(Loud and prolonged chorus in Council).

Hai,* Hai, Hai, Hai, Hai.

* Peace.

SACHEM (*to MOHAWK*).

See, friend, we must thus answer these demands,
And give to them this paleface maid—thy squaw.

MOHAWK (*to SACHEM*).

As Mohawk to whom wampum hath been sent,
As thou art now at peace with the Iroquois,
I charge thee to protect this maid—my squaw,
By marriage Mohawk and of Iroquois.

(*Subdued cries*).

Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah.

SACHEM (*to MOHAWK*).

Be free of speech to Council here,
No words now spare that lead us right,
For, brother, hearts are all with thee,
And if thou canst make head and heart
Of one intent, we will then raise
The tomahawk and go to war.

(*Loud chorus of Council*).

Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah.

MOHAWK.

Pequots: the Mohawks, they are men of blood,
They are the bears who never die, but live,
For Athenentsic,* queen of heaven, guards.
She gave to their first father birth. From her
They came into this land to live supreme.
They pay no tribute to demand. Command
They take unto themselves as theirs alone.
They are the keepers of the sunrise door
Of the Long House,† and older brothers to
The mighty Senecas, Onondagas,
Oneidas, Cayugas—the Iroquois
Much feared by French and by these Englishmen——

(*Pauses briefly*.)

The bear is greatest Mohawk clan—it's here.

(*Shows totem*.)

My brother he now wears the white heron,
He's great At-o-ta-ho,‡ the chief of you,
Of me, and paleface men we meet near here.
In me the voices of some spirits say:

* A legendary origin.

† Symbol of Five Nations Confederation.

‡ Name given first supreme chief; title of office.

"He-do-no-sonne * warriors will come."

I am one warrior far from my tribe.

Once when the bird of life was on the wing

And sounds were heard above the highest trees

Of whipping winds against each branch and leaf

The Spirit of the Night came unto me

And told a tale of wonders yet to be:

A tale whose calling reached to me in dreams

And led upon new paths far from my tribe.

The moons they have made winters since I left,

And while I speak not for the Iroquois,

Yet many belts will voice my talk to thee.

This belt of wampum now confirms my words.

(Hands belt to Sachem.)

Ere day was gone, and deep twilight approached,

We left the villages and danced the dance

Of Manitou. Pequots and Mohawk braves.

That made us brothers, then by closer ties

This calumet has since made tighter bonds.

No one can give denial to my words. *(Prolonged pause.)*

Brothers: what is greater than man's bravery.

Courage it is bravest when for woman,

Eagles strike for mates with spreading talons;

Beasts fail not when she who bears their young is

Sought by hunters mid dens safely hidden.

Mohawks, like the bird and beast, save women.

Would I then become a dog affrighted

When a snarling wolf is heard a-yelping?

No—in voice of ringing countless echoes!

No—in heaven's tones of wildest thunder!

No—I am alive—a bear, a Mohawk!

No—for, friends, yon paleface maid is worthy!

(Short pause.)

I honor death by proudly facing it.

I am one Mohawk here with Pequots, friends.

I look on you. I read your faces now.

I see before me men—all warriors.

I hear their voices rumbling in their depths,

Like captured eagles anxious to be free.

I see their lips all tightly closed to sound

That would escape. Their throats they swell to break

* League of Iroquois.

This silence which my talk has given me.

I know their words—now wait no longer—speak!

(COUNCIL *spring to feet, waving arms and tomahawks. Amid loud shouts of "Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah. Go-hah."*)

SACHEM (*to COUNCIL*).

Hold silence, brothers, hearken to the words

I say; let them sink deep within thy hearts.

The one Great Spirit made his children like

He made the forest trees, some stalwart oaks,

Some branching elms, some weeping willows, and

Some but the scrub that grows about the others.

The nations of the Iroquois, they are

The stalwart oaks, we are the elms and willows,

Palefaces are the scrub about us here.

Now, for our growth, the thieving scrub must perish.

My people, then let us to these knifemen

Reply: we fight by side of Iroquois.

(*Wild enthusiasm, shouts of approval and confusion.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE II

Scene: In the woods near to the Indian villages.

Time: The gray that follows dark. Same day. Enter

SERGEANT.

CALVERT.

What say you, sergeant, hath the enemy
Much force near by?

SERGEANT.

There are two villages;

One by the river's edge, and one a mile
Therefrom, upon the higher land beyond.

CALVERT.

What of the force that can assemble there?

SERGEANT.

In lower village on the river bank
I'd say no more than even hundred would
Defend; in upper, well, as many more.

CALVERT.

With such a force opposed against what we
Now muster, should defiance and attack
Be upon us, 'twould seem the welcome odds
Are ours. A soldier of the Colony
With powder dry and flint sharp-sparkèd is
Equal to ten such heathen dogs as these.

BRAINERD.

My Captain, 'tis un-Christianlike to name
Them dogs. They neither bark nor bite.

CALVERT.

With that

I do not find agreement, for who says
The painted devils do not bark had best
See them in dance of torture, and who says

His nay unto the biting, why, let him
 Then play the victim to such pranks, and he'll
 Soon learn how quick the jackals are upon
 The feast.

SERGEANT.

Aye, sir; I've fought them these ten years
 Or more, and 'tis the only way to treat
 With them.

CALVERT (*to BRAINERD*).

Now there's a vet'ran's verdict for
 Thee, man.

BRAINERD.

Thy words may be as true as day,
 But with these eyes of mine I've seen some good
 'Mongst them.

CALVERT.

The good in them, comrade, is like
 The honesty in thieves; 'tis only to
 Be seen when thou art looking.

BRAINERD.

By my faith,
 I'm of same mind as pious Eliot,
 Whose doctrine is to teach, not fight with them.
 They're willing converts to the faith, 'tis true,
 As some have shown and Eliot hath proved.

CALVERT.

Aye, Brainerd, thou art of a kind who cram
 The head with theories while the belly's put
 To no denial for its food, but let
 Them prove but theories by experience
 Which brings some anxious hunger, then will such
 A practise change from preaching.

BRAINERD.

You speak, man,
 As though I were a suckling—as if feel
 Of sword held kin to touch of toy.

CALVERT.

Not so:
 Thou art now giving air to grievance born
 Of thine own doubt.

BRAINERD (*angrily*).

Of what? Away with such

Reflections!

CALVERT.

Doubt of theories, man, naught else.

Flint spark in powder shows poor speed unto

Thy change from holiness to quarreling.

BRAINERD.

I take both joke and banter from a friend,

But he must learn the limit of a tongue

Lest it o'erride a personal topic long.

Resentment it is fired thus, till man

He's tempest-tossed.

CALVERT.

Rebuke deserved I take,

And some amends I make with my regrets.

BRAINERD.

Well said, of honest frankness that, my hand.

CALVERT.

And mine. (*They grasp outstretched hands, wring them heartily.*)

I'm strongly set on subject of

The reds. Their many cruelties are deeds

That start the flesh a-creep.

BRAINERD.

Yet on the page

Of crime they have not writ alone.

CALVERT.

'Tis true,

For crime no man is all responsible

Since self and others, time and place,

And action, too, are parents of intent,

One is enough to make the deed

But which one does 'tis well concealed.

BRAINERD.

Aye, and

With blanket that no sweat of justice may

E'en lend its moisture to.

CALVERT.

Why art thou for
The Indian so strong? 'Tis strangeness that
Some action's bred. Was't long ago?

BRAINERD.

Aye, back

In forty-four, when murder done by hands
That should been stayed, a blot did place on this
Our settlement's fair name. You know of it?

CALVERT.

'Tis as may be I know or know it not,
Since man forgets and needs reminder now
And then.

BRAINERD.

I speak of Miontomino,
A man somewhat more worthy than those of
A usual mould. By act deep written, red,
In blood he died, and raised a spirit at
The time to tell our perfidy to men.

CALVERT.

I do recall yet look upon the deed
With eye some different from eye of yours.
In foray 'gainst the enemy I once
Made captive of a chief—his tribe it was
The fierce and warlike Abenaki, whose
Exploits our fathers they were wont to tell
Of winter evenings, till each shadow grew
An Indian.

BRAINERD.

And what disposition
Was made of him to warrant this recall?

CALVERT.

Hast seen the rain as't fell upon the stones,
Great drops rebounding but to splash again?
Such were his futile efforts to be free,
While no more chance had he than rain released
From heaven's clouds. Thus his attempt was like
Those splashing drops that bound to fall again.

BRAINERD.

What then became of him?

CALVERT.

He turned upon
Himself to cheat a Christian payment of
The deed.

BRAINERD.

In time to come, when history deals
With us, look for a just rebuke, and scorn
That comes from robbers' deeds—such wanton deeds
As you and I perform.

CALVERT.

Away, thou friend
Of red men, judging us at fault. I say
Away.

BRAINERD.

'Tis honester to own the truth.
The Indian is our enemy
Because we have not been his friend.

CALVERT.

Thou art
Now wrong, for often but to further his
Own buying hath I given him some of
My copper pennies for his little beads
Of wampum at the rate of eight white beads
Or four blue beads for every coin.

BRAINERD.

Doth that
Now speak for generosity?

CALVERT.

Aye, since
I gave a value for the doubt of it.

BRAINERD.

Thou, Captain, knowest well this wampum buys
Both furs and grain, and thine own values are
Against its worth. I one coin pay for six
Of white and two of blue.

CALVERT.

Aye, but thou art
Following an error which hatches out
An Indian.

SERGEANT.

Yet thou hast been much feared
Knifeman among these savages.

BRAINERD.

I am
A soldier of the King and Colony.
Their battles they are mine, while justice of
Their wars is for some other to decide.

CALVERT.

Well said, good Brainerd, worthy man art thou
And honest soldier too. What have we here?

(*Enter soldier with DICK FELLOWS in custody.*)

SOLDIER.

I found this remnant of thy force prone to
Retreat.

CALVERT.

What ho, and so thou didst attempt
Desertion; grievous crime, that handy limb
And hempen cord makes scarce by example.

DICK (*in quivering voice*).

Good Captain, I followed a butterfly.

SOLDIER.

He told me 'twas a singing bird whose voice
He'd imitate.

CALVERT.

Excuse should go one way
And not in all directions. Which is now
True reason, or are both foul lies? Speak out!

DICK.

Speech is a-tremble in my throat. Give time
To it—give time. My reasons they are true
When not so garbled out of shape as those
Delivered here to thee. The bird did court
The butterfly.

CALVERT.

And would have made a match
Of it?

DICK (*regaining confidence*).

'Tis that I would have known for thee
Had not this meddler come between.

CALVERT.

How little takes thee from a fight.

By faith,

DICK.

Of truth,

There's less comes from than goes to fights. Once I
 Saw spiders battle, both lost legs, but they
 Had more to get 'way with; (*Looks at legs.*) while these
 of mine,
 Should one be left behind, would set progress
 A bad example.

CALVERT.

Fighter thou art not.

DICK.

And yet I've seen some fighting sharp indeed.

SERGEANT.

Some knavery, not much bravery, would I say.

CALVERT.

Aye, bits of courage for the downy lip.

DICK.

Would hear me tell of it?

CALVERT.

Aye, loose thy tongue.

DICK.

I own a cock of speckled feather, and
 A red-brown rooster, husband unto hens
 A-plenty. Faith and truth, good sirs, content
 With one, I cannot make the fowl. I hath
 Oft tried to follow what is preached against
 Such bigamy.

CALVERT.

I fear it is a case

For council—bad example harbors thus.

DICK.

I wish thou wouldst then summons him.

CALVERT.

I will,

And hang him, too, for lusty meal.

DICK.

Yet, sir,

It would be hard upon the widows.

BRAINERD.

Talk

Of this, it smacks of frivolity.

CALVERT.

Talk

Of fools is tonic for a seriousness
Sometimes. Proceed now, fellow Dick.

DICK.

The cock

And rooster, was I there?

SERGEANT.

Nay, but thou wouldst

Have been had watchful eyes not watched for thee.

DICK.

The rooster and the cock once saw one grain
Of corn, and while more were about, for I'm
No stingy man, they both in haste did make
For it: Which got the grain, I never knew,
But 'twas a fight of great excitement with
Much cost, for both the cock and rooster now
Have lost in value some.

CALVERT.

I wager thou

Wilt find a fight, ere sun it finds the day,
That will bestir thy vitals with some fears
If not with steel or poisoned dart.

DICK.

Thou didst

Once say that fifty more stout fellows would
To liking be. I'll go and fetch them, if
Thy mind is now the same. Is it thy wish?

CALVERT.

Thou art not even moth in courage, it
Is not afraid to flit about the blaze.

SERGEANT.

I'll use him well in our advance with dawn's
Approach.

BRAINERD.

A fearful man sometimes is good
For use when place is tight and fight is thick,
Since fear it gives unusual power of
Defense.

DICK.

I'll fight, I'll fight, unless, perchance,
Now, Captain, thou hast better use for me?
A messenger unto the settlements
For lads thou didst here want. Shall I now go?

CALVERT.

We'll use what we have here and fight as best
We know. Now, Brainard, take thou twenty men,
With them advance as near the village as
A safety from discovery will permit.
And, Sergeant, with a dozen more, go thou
And ambuscade the paths that run between
The upper and the lower towns. Brave Dick,
Come thou with me, and be thou wary of
Desertion as the fear of hanging will
Permit. I'll warrant that ere break of dawn
There'll be red devils better known to hell,
Perchance in heaven some good men welcomed.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE III

Scene: In the forest beyond the Indian village.

Time: Early afternoon next day. Mohawk seated wearily on a fallen tree. Thankful standing at some distance.

MOHAWK.

White maid, draw near, here will I rest by tree,
Its branches they will shield, its roots enfold.
The fruit of Niyoh * it is ripe for me,
Sweet strawberries they now come near my lips.

THANKFUL.

Art thou so weary when the day is bright
And fresh, enriched by spring perfumes: the airs
Are heavy laden with the whiffs of sweet
New grass, and budding leaves by every wind
Are told from south, from north, from east, from west.

MOHAWK.

The sun is goldened by its brightest gown,
The earth is gladdened by each sparkling ray;
I'm happy that 'tis so. Dear maid, I sleep
Forever here. Onward alone you go.

(Hands her totems from neck.)

With thee my totems take—they show thy clan
Of bear, of wolf that is here broidered on.
To all you meet say: Mohawk Yongwe † of
The great He-do-no-sonne, sister to
The At-o-ta-ho who avenges wrongs
And for all kindness ample payment makes.
Say thou art going to Yon-nom-de-yoh.‡
And when thou hast in safety reached Quebec
Look southward to this spot where I shall lie
And think, white maid, of one who loved thee well.

* God.

† A woman.

‡ Governor of Canada.

THANKFUL.

What means the noble Mohawk brave,
Thou friend and guide of many trails?
Art thou so sore with combat then,
So wearied by this long pursuit?

MOHAWK.

Mohawk maiden of palefaces,
Mohawk hearken, death comes nigh;
See this day's a time of parting,
Hear a Mohawk's dying cry.

THANKFUL

Nay, friend, stay words so sad,
Art thou then wounded much?
Why didst thou not tell me
Of this, thy grievous hurt?

MOHAWK.

The bear he minds no pain,
He walks upright and brave
While blood is warm in him;
And when it doth grow cold
He then lies down to wait
In patience till he hears
The spirits' call afar.

THANKFUL (*sitting beside him*).

Thou art not here to die,
Thy brave and noble soul
It will yet sustain thee. (*Quietly rouses him.*)
Awake now, warrior. (*Makes greater effort.*)
Awake, and call to it. (*He stirs and murmurs.*)
Aye, call thee, loudly call.

MOHHAWK (*raises himself slightly on elbow*).

Who calls? Who calls the bear? (*Falls back.*)
Now pillow thee my head. (*She takes his head in her lap.*)
I have long loved thee well. (*He lies quietly.*)

THANKFUL.

I will now chafe thy hands. (*Begins rubbing his hands.*)
How damp and cold they are,
Aye, and I will give thee
A draught that brings new life; (*Takes flask from bosom
and places it to his lips.*)

'Tis of some liquor old
The priest he gave to me.

MOHAWK

(Raises himself to a sitting posture).

For minute now new life it comes. *(Turns to her.)*
Thy lips so brightly red will they
For once touch mine that pale so soon? *(She kisses him.)*
A sweet repayment for my life. *(Pause, she holds his hand.)*

The warm fire-lights are far away
With castles of my people there. *(Raises arm. Points westward.)*

A mist hath fallen on my eyes,
My ears sweet sounds in distance hear,
My wearied limbs grow cold and stiff,
My hand hath lost its strength of grip,
My arm will ne'er raise tomahawk,
My heart hath but a gentle throb,
My head is drowsy with death sleep,
Another kiss from thy lips, maid. *(She kisses him.)*
I am repaid like night by day.

If such is life what then is death? *(Short pause. Rises, sways, faces the east, she steadies him. In loud voice:)*

I come; I am a Mohawk bear,
Both unafraid and undismayed!

(He falls at her feet, dead.)

THANKFUL *(kneels by his side).*

Alas, he, too, hath died, and thus
True friends, one after one, depart,
And sorrow leaves its sad imprint,
For hearts ne'er heal that once are seared.

(Gazes at dead Indian.)

No tears now spring unto mine eyes,
Yet there's deep pain within my heart,
A pain such scenes as this will bring
To me where'er or how I be.

(Lays hand on his brow.)

A savage truly thou mayst been,
But 'neath thy red-brown chest so deep,

A chivalrous man's heart did beat,
A kind of heart few women know.

(Rises. Wipes tears from her eyes.)

Are these salt tears from sorrow's fount
That deeper grief hath held in check?
Do I now weep for that held dear,
But held not dear as dear it was?

(Gazes tearfully upon him.)

Would that my cheeks had thy red tinge,
My heart the grandeur of thy soul,
That race of race we had been one,
And this most sad hour ne'er had come.

(Turns slowly away.)

Now will I seek to find green leaves
And let them form thy native shroud.
Thou of the forest were, and back
Unto thine own thou hast now gone.

(Goes into the forest.)

(Enter soldiers of the Colony.)

FIRST SOLDIER.

It was forsooth a pretty fight,
With scampers for the enemy,
And much activity for us;
What say you, comrade, out with it?

SECOND SOLDIER.

I say this war's a bloody thing,
When fighting but to hang a witch.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Well, she's away, it's fools who count
On catching witches napping long.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Aye, so say I, and so say more
Who've been a-playing scalping here.

FIRST SOLDIER.

(Springs to cover, seeing body of dead Indian).
Go ye to cover. Indians!

SECOND SOLDIER *(gets behind tree).*

Where, comrade? I see none about.

FIRST SOLDIER

(stepping cautiously from cover).

Here's one; but since he's safely dead

We need not fear a harm from him.

I think I'll wear the scalp of him,

'Tis lock of fine adornment, mate.

(Takes knife from belt and starts toward body.

Enter THANKFUL, sees him approach, takes up the fallen Mohawk's tomahawk and stands over his body.

THANKFUL.

Now by my life, ye touch him not,

Thou worse than savage in such arts!

Hath no one taught thee to respect

That which once housed the soul of man?

FIRST SOLDIER.

Why, 'tis in truth the witch.

Aye, now beware her charms.

THANKFUL.

My charms are innocent,

Naught but fair face and form;

My heart it, too, is pure,

Hence, men, I know not fear.

(Enter CALVERT and more soldiers.)

CALVERT *(surprised and startled).*

Why, here's the witch, much bloodshed's cause.

Now seize her, soldiers, ere by spells

She doth some evil cast, and thus

Again escape for harmful deeds.

THANKFUL *(in menacing attitude).*

Thy orders, Captain Calvert, stay,

Ere blood it flows: enough's been shed.

Thy soldiers would the Mohawk scalp

Here lying dead in my defense;

One honester than any here,

And of much greater chivalry.

Bid these, thy men, go gather leaves

So I may gently cover him.

Then with such heroes' tribute paid,

I'll be thy pris'ner. Go in peace.

CALVERT.

Go, some of thee, and bring her leaves,
It is at least most easy way;
And as for me, I feel sharp strain
Of recent struggle and hard strife.

*(Soldiers bring leaves, THANKFUL covers the
body of dead Mohawk.)*

THANKFUL.

Now, Captain of the Colony,
I am thy pris'ner, but no witch. *(Surrenders.)*

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Scene: Same as Act I. Scene 2.

Time: Two weeks later in the afternoon.

FIRST VILLAGER.

I've heard it said.

SECOND VILLAGER.

Aye, thou hast heard it said,

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye, I have heard it said before the sun.

SECOND VILLAGER.

Before the sun. Aye, so, before the sun.

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye, I have heard it said before the sun
Goes down a witch will hang.

SECOND VILLAGER.

A witch will hang.

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye, hang in this here town

SECOND VILLAGER.

She'll hang. She'll hang.

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye, hang.

SECOND VILLAGER.

And so 'twill be.

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye, so 'twill be,

And we'll all have much peace.

SECOND VILLAGER.

Much peace.

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye so,

Much peace, and prosper, too.

SECOND VILLAGER.

'Tis God's own news.

Nay, nay, gainsay me not; 'tis God's own news.

Aye, aye, a plenty, plenty more than thought.

FIRST VILLAGER.

I've heard it said that for this witch-riddance

There'll be a holiday.

SECOND VILLAGER.

A holiday,

Didst thou hear it so said?

FIRST VILLAGER.

Aye, aye, I did,

I did and maybe two of them there'll be,

I've heard it said.

SECOND VILLAGER.

Aye, thou didst hear it said.

What ears thou hast for hearing things; what ears.

(Enter Brainerd.)

BRAINERD.

Aye, ears for all ungodly mischief. Out

With ye, miscreants, now, all of ye, and take

Along thy likings, idle ways do bring.

And with them joy in others mis'ry. Out

Of this, I say, or to one side. Here comes

The Governor and Council by this way.

(Enter GOVERNOR and COUNCIL. Take their seats. All bowing briefly in prayer.)

CALVERT.

Now hath your Excellency word for these

The people here, or shall the pris'ners be

Conducted to your presence straight away?

GOVERNOR.

I have no words. Hence, Captain, summons them.

(Exit CALVERT. Re-enter with THANKFUL in chains. MASON and MAGGIE under guard.)

GOVERNOR (*to MASON and MAGGIE*).

Ye are both duly charged before me now
With aiding and abetting witchcraft here.
What say you, Thomas Mason, to the charge?

MASON.

My lord, who 'gainst vile falseness makes a plea
Doth do some honor to the mouth of lies,
While he who scorns perjurers one and all
Hath satisfaction though he hang for it.
Mine honor cries an answer thus and so,
Yet, were I here before thee charged alone
No answer save silent disdain I'd make;
But with me charged, here stands my worthy dame;
With both, a maid, so innocent of wrong
That tears would blind me were I not a man;
Poor devil workers were we three at best,
To find a presence 'mongst such enemies.
I have heard it right wisely oftentimes said
That Satan keeps a watch upon his own.
To me there is much mock'ry in thy show,
As faces of old friends are masked in frowns,
Their roaming glances see all else but me,
Yet their round middles oft my victuals held;
In truth, and since I look upon them close,
Their girths, forsooth, have lost an inch or two;
'Tis thus misfortune crowns without a realm
Its jewels—all the gems of knowing men,
Its scepter power over self alone,
Since from its touch the best may rise again.
For mine own plea take right good honesty
That hath survived attack nigh two score years,
And for my dame I interpose the same,
Yet minus many of the years of mine.
Now, Governor of this fair Colony,
The honor of new lands it rests with thee,
I pray it be not marred by violence
Against the body of this tender maid,
Whose childlike thoughts and acts have never sinned.
To her thy free and ample pardon give,
Although she hath done naught that warrants me
In asking it, or pleading innocence.

GOVERNOR.

Hast thou then spoken for thy dame as well?

MAGGIE.

Aye, on this one occasion he doth speak
For me, but I will let thee hear my voice
Before thou art full through with me.

CALVERT.

Come now,

Peace, woman, lest thy tongue o'erride respect.

MAGGIE (*turning to* CALVERT).

How long thy face is stretched in solemn shape,
Beware lest you lose all thy neck to it.

GOVERNOR.

Thou hast well shown to me and Council here
Thou art a man of honest, high intent,
And both old friend and neighbor, too, thou hast
These many years proved me. Of late it hath
Been here, in these wild settlements. Before
'Twas in old Sussex 'cross the seas. From this
And from thy purpose here disclosed, all good
And worthy reasons in like tenor come
Conclusions that thou art both innocent—
Thy dame and thee—that ye are victims to
A sorceress, whose arts, ungodly, in
A league of deviltry hath been long turned
In thy direction. Therefore take a free
And ample pardon from His Majesty.
But, for this maid, of whom you freely speak,
I have no mercy to bestow on her.
Hers are great crimes for punishment. They're 'gainst
Both God and King. And as example to
All who'd pursue the devil's path like this
She's on, I must condemn. 'Tis hard, but right.

(*Enter MALCOLM.*)MALCOLM (*interrupting*).

My lord, I crave some private speech with thee.

GOVERNOR (*angrily*).

How now, must I be interrupted? Know
You, sir, here sits a court, the highest in
This land?

CALVERT.

Ill-timed interruption, I'd

Make it.

MALCOLM.

No less ill-timed than 'tis now

Ill-taken, with no such dire consequence

As follows if ignored.

CALVERT.

A right of speech

Precedes the speech, and in this court such rule

Applies. Hence, Master Stranger, court'ous act,

Deportment, words that consort therewith are

Expected. Their absence's contempt, which doth

Entail some punishment.

GOVERNOR.

By virtue of

What power do you speak?

MALCOLM.

By virtue of

A grant beyond thy power to bestow.

Consideration prompts a preface to

A duty, with my words. 'Tis for this court's

High honor, sir.

GOVERNOR.

We lack thy doubtful skill

In covert meanings, with the time for their

Uncovering. In shape of rights we know

A single pattern, favor cuts alone

To turn our hearing t'wards the speech that comes

From lips of strangers in our midst.

MALCOLM.

Addressed

As stranger, yet I am no stranger here.

Event it follows happening too sharp

For that, since trav'lers met with jest or by

Discord may don or drop their stranger garb

At will. And yet pastime's no prompter to

My voice, nor inclination reason of

My visit, for such words as I would say

To thee have greater ring in public than

In private ears, though best in quiet, sir.

GOVERNOR.

When we have given duty its demands
To render fair and honest judgment here,
We'll hearken then to words thou hast to say.

MALCOLM.

This is the most fit time for speaking, since
A judgment stayed were better than remade.

GOVERNOR.

Away with silly lack of consequence,
And test the temper of this court no more.

MALCOLM.

Cannot suggestion stay such stubbornness,
Or must enforced speech be so employed?

CALVERT.

Thy speech's now without authority.

MALCOLM.

Nay,

For authority is import of words
When said. Pray grant this timely court'sy me:
It is a right I might assert I crave.
Such as disclosure it will prove to thee.

GOVERNOR.

Thy authority, else we now proceed.

MALCOLM.

Your Excellency, think twice ere you answer,
For much official and efficient justice
Doth hang on varied limbs of authority;
He higher climbs whose branch the top is nearer.

GOVERNOR.

Be silent at my bidding, else thy speech
Be rudely shortened by rough hands that will,
I warrant, cut it close. Now look to him.
I'm wearied of his interruptions here.

(CALVERT goes toward MALCOLM, who draws
his sword.)

MALCOLM.

Stand away, and put no hand upon me!
Consideration hath outrun itself,

Since demand for hearing's met so rudely.
Now, Gov'nor, hearken well to what I say.

(CALVERT *approaches close*. MALCOLM *makes pass.*)

Begone with those you lead; I'm master here!

CALVERT (*shouting to soldiers*).
At him, my men, from sides and rear; at him!

MALCOLM (*sweeping sword about him*).
Nay, save thy skins and vitals from my sword;
I wield a blade of many points and cuts,
And in such midst 'twill carve unduly free.
Hear, Gov'nor, or you'll rue thy hasty act.

(*Thrusts at soldiers vigorously.*)

Away, I'm not here now alone, ye dogs;
All unprepared for vi'lence such as this.
My ships ride anchor scarce a league away;
If ye would stay thy noises for a pace
The tramp of armed men's feet thine ears would greet.

(*Brief pause and silence.*)

CALVERT.
If pirate, then thy horde's deserted thee.

GOVERNOR.
How lives a treason vile as this? Is it,
Too, witchcraft's curse so close in midst of us?
At him, bind him most strongly, hand and foot!

MALCOLM (*in loud tones*).
When blood's thy cry, I'll give it thee. Yet hear,
And hold. I speak for Charles, thy gracious king.
I am supreme in these, his colonies,
With vested powers none may supersede.
Sir Hector Malcolm here ye see endowed
By royal patent grant: "The King's Envoy."

GOVERNOR (*rising*).
Back, Captain Calvert, with thy men; back all
Of ye. (*To Envoy.*) Why, sir, so tardy with thy voice
Which doth proclaim thy high commission here?
And since but word of mouth, how may we judge
Of its real worth as truth or lie?

MALCOLM.

(taking commission from doublet).

By this:

A written instrument. 'Tis signed and sealed
 By Charles the King of England, lord of these
 New lands—his colonies—a royal hand
 Did write name here (*points to signature*) and here his
 Premier. (*Points to other signature.*)

GOVERNOR.

By royal will in thee we now retire,
 As subjects wait the pleasure of a king
 In person, else by proxy just proclaimed.
 And must apology accompany
 Regret we heard thee not, and thou silent
 Of dignity remained. Distinction such
 As you possess should find no court wherein
 Deception reigns. The public trial holds.

MALCOLM.

Nay, since my hand was forced by violence,
 My taste finds flavor most in public ears,
 For words I'd hear that judgment might be formed.
 Proceed, I'll here attend, and should appeal
 Be made against some ruling that's unfair
 I'll then decide such question, for the King

MASON.

Now may compassion know itself again,
 And check the vi'lence of this vi'lent state.

CALVERT.

In order keep thy tongue.

MASON.

'Tis task that speaks
 Great wisdom, known only to those born dumb.

GOVERNOR.

Now let the pris'ner-witch before me stand,
 And sentence for her grievous crimes receive.

(THANKFUL stands. Addresses her.)

By this high court, in trial fair, upon
 Sworn proof thou hast been found as guilty, witch,
 And here, in name of our most gracious King,

I thee condemn to burning at the stake;
A punishment that fits such mighty sin.
Thy erring soul I now commend to God
In hope that He may lead thee to confess
And crave forgiveness ere it be too late.

(*To* CAPTAIN CALVERT.)

I charge thee with this execution, sir,
And when the sun's an hour set, report
This devil's consort dead to human form.
Let not fair maiden's shape deter thee; keep
In mind disguises Satan doth affect.

CALVERT.

I'm soldier, not an executioner, sir;
As such, selection of another's asked.

GOVERNOR.

How now, doth lack the nerve for such a deed?

CALVERT.

My nerve can see a man to two parts carved,
His head cut from a wriggling, bloody neck,
But when it comes to such pursuits as this,
Some other may my office freely take,
For I'll have none of it to my account.
These words are final, and in all respect.

MASON.

Comrade, thou hast the spirit of man's speech,
Thy heart a lasting honor does to thee.

CALVERT.

Silence; thy speech's confined unto thy plea.

GOVERNOR.

Am I not Gov'nor here by King's command,
Or are my orders of a light regard?

CALVERT.

I was the Captain of this Colony,
But now return my commission to thee;
And since no order stands thus in the way,
Some newer Captain will thy bidding do.

GOVERNOR.

Remand the pris'ner who hath been condemned,
Release the others since no case is proved.

Thou, Captain, art from duty here relieved;
Lieutenant Brainerd, he commands instead.

MALCOLM.

'Tis time the corpse of Justice rose to flay
Such travesty upon a name misused.
The calling right a right and sin a sin
Is naming act by life's impost. But when
A cruel wrong is garbed in Virtue's cloak,
A-wearing hood that hides a lying face,
Then it behooves us to awake and rouse
Fair, honest Truth. Thus, time for speech is here.
Defense is kin unto all existence,
In protest or approval—it is right
That bars infringement—claims no denial,
Hence, Governor and Council, heed my words:
I've been amongst ye now the past fortnight;
I came in clamor of thy witches' hunt.
'Twas in that hour of excitement great
I saw and spoke the maid ye sought so much,
And from her lips I learned her innocence.
I witnessed then the fury of thy quest,
And slaughter saw of those without offense,
As well the loss of many men unto
The settlements. But better proofs of right
Misnamed I find this day, in acts and deeds
Recent happened are all of them, and they
Shape honest judgment now followed for thee
And which by royal decree I proclaim.
The maid here charged a witch ye persecute;
As observation it hath easily proved
To all save those who from false zeal are blind,
So, by will of his Majesty, she's free.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

SCENE II

*Scene: The shore of the Colony near to the settlements.
The ships of "The King's Envoy" riding at anchor
in the offing.*

Time: Late twilight, a week later.

MASON.

So we're now home again, my lass.

MAGGIE.

Aye, so;
And home is good to find when long without.

MASON.

Now, since the story it hath all been told,
The wrong that might have been should breed some
thought

Where act had progeny. I warrant thee
The Gov'nor thinks some of the ways he went,
And Calvert, too, now Captain here again.
He is contrite as rough old soldier well
Can be when e'er sweet Mistress Thankful he
Doth see. Aye, 'twas a lesson 'gainst much haste.

MAGGIE.

And who'd a-thought Sir Hector such a man
Of consequence.

MASON.

It is one point of life
We know not all, and knowing what we do
We know how ill to judge a man before
He by some act doth judge himself for us.

MAGGIE.

Here now he lingers when he said he would
Away.

MASON.

A woman is the root of much
Delay in nations and in men; a word,
A sigh, or bright well-kindlèd eye will keep
Where armies they would fail to hold.

MAGGIE.

And thus
You think he stays to dawdle here, content
That she he loves be near?

MASON.

Aye, lass, and since
A love well told will bring a tingle to
The veins, such as good wine when old and blood
Grows sluggish with a lack of it, here in
The evening, romance-laden hour, tell me
The maiden's love.

MAGGIE.

Thus marriage paints the love
Of others on its own canvas.

MASON.

Nay, doth
But help the bloom by telling of the bud.

MAGGIE.

I might unravel thee her slender-wound
Thought skein, and draw some pictures you well know,
But do recall with little frequency,
By thy loss of a youthful modesty.
Hear well, for 'tis a vestal virgin's feast,
Albeit thy reign of sense hath mixèd in
Nonsense these many years gone by. She loves,
But loving is slow to forgive a tale
Unknowing told to him from whom she would
Conceal. A woman's love confessed is sweet
To her and him when told with wooing words,
And only sweet to him when otherwise.

MASON.

Here strolls the valiant knight, Sir Hector, wrapped
Well in his sleep of love, a King's business
It waits on him, or on her now through him.
Come, we'll away, 'tis well to let him dream.

The sun it dies with lover's pangs, the moon
It rises with soft whispers in its sighs.

MALCOLM.

The spirit of endeavor bids man try.
But what's endeavor's guide, who knows when right,
Who knows when wrong, till tried? So currents of
A life are spent before the holder finds
Them gone, and thus the wrecks a grave engulfs,
The sighs that linger on, yet what of it.
The new each day are born: the old passed on
With question eternal, where hath they gone?

*(Seats himself on grass, looking toward settle-
ments.)*

When first disclosure did disclose the priest,
The red beneath each cheek it leaped and leaped,
And since fair modesty made promise for
The lass so sweetly shy, I could but look
Away and sigh, with thought of joy of him
Whose hand and voice such innocence might teach.

(Short pause.)

Ah, 'twould be well I lost all thoughts here born,
Yet who hath lived to dig a grave for thought;
It is a ghost who flits by day and night,
And never by thy leave doth ask permit.
Methinks it is a crier for our sins
That conscience finds most active duties for,
And yet from 'mongst the hosts of life's regrets
It doles some sweetness out, good pay for all.

(Rises and looks about him.)

I wonder—men all do—I wonder if
She will come here and meet with me alone,
My penitence to hear? *(Touches heart.)* I feel a throb
That tells a bounding heart. One bound for hope,
Ten bounds for doubt. *(Looks westward.)* How fast
the sun it falls.

She will not answer my appeal by dark,
And in the morning I will then away,
Henceforth a stranger to all wiles of love.

*(Enter THANKFUL softly. She stands watching
him.)*

THANKFUL.

Here, Master "King's Envoy," obedient
To royal will, am I. You sent for me,
And as I came along I scanned all those
I met in search of new disguise.

MALCOLM (*bowing low.*)

I have
Been waiting here a slave unto my doubts.

THANKFUL.

But since thy will is here supreme, why doubt?
I come, and as thy message did inveigh:
I come alone.

MALCOLM.

I've sought for thee since noon.
Till now bad luck was mine.

THANKFUL.

And since I find
Thee deep in reverie, I take it that
Bad luck hath not yet walked away.

MALCOLM.

Not walked,
'Tis true, for winged it flew when you, fair maid,
Did deign to come to me.

THANKFUL.

What nature was
Thy urgent quest? It must have been of some
Import, demanding hours between high noon
And dark. If 'tis desire of speech with me,
Be brief.

MALCOLM.

Sweet Mistress Thankful, 'twas farewell;
I fear I will not see thee more, since on
The morrow's early tide my ships they weigh
Their anchors and hoist sails.

THANKFUL.

Farewell, then, most
Kind sir, I'm thankful that you came to us.

MALCOLM.

Is thankfulness of such moment
As to outweigh my deep offense?
In truth, deception was a play
I with great reluctance did make.

THANKFUL.

Of me ask no forgiveness, sir,
Thy service was in truth so great. (*Offers hand.*)
And now a safe return to thee;
Farewell again, and last good-night.

MALCOLM.

Some queries answer me, and source from which
Replies are drawn, sweet maiden, let it be
As true, as blue a lavish nature gave
Unto thine eyes.

THANKFUL.

The promise made before
The question's asked, is no more promise than
The sea makes when it leaves the sands.

MALCOLM.

I'll crave

A fair consideration from thee, then.
Art thou remaining here?

THANKFUL.

I know not, sir.

MALCOLM.

Would to Virginia go?

THANKFUL.

I know not, sir.

MALCOM.

Or to the far-off Canadas, where it
Is cold, and speech is foreign unto thee?

THANKFUL.

I know not, sir.

MALCOLM.

Be not displeasèd with
My speech of inquiry. 'Tis cover to
A book of interest that chill in thy
Late manner hath kept shut.

THANKFUL.

'Tis indiscreet

To open books sometimes, as to turn gaze
Upon a heart through subterfuge, and by
Such hasty glance there is as little's learned;
For ne'er was story told by one sentence,
Or single paragraph.

MALCOLM.

A multitude

Of meaning hath thy speech.

THANKFUL.

'Tis quality

Of speech that's good—a method whereby fools
Are taught to think.

MALCOLM.

Is it now so employed?

THANKFUL.

It might be to advantage.

MALCOLM.

Speech with thee

As suitor or as fool, if thy sweet will
But frame reply, is lasting joy for all
Reflection, and a mem'ry that would make
A heart that's old as young as once it was.

THANKFUL.

Thou art a prince of repartee,
And knight of pretty speeches, sir.

MALCOLM.

Nay, when I am with thee my tongue
It proves no weapon of defense,
Nor can it find a fancy for
The smaller talk's delight. In truth,
It is a traitor unto me,
And slave to thee.

THANKFUL.

I must away.

The night is settling fast. The dews
Of Spring are heavy hereabouts.
Fair voyage, and a happy one.

MALCOLM.

Thus happiness comes only true in dreams.

THANKFUL.

I will then wait till you recount me one.

MALCOLM.

In dreams that would woo sleep forevermore,
I've dreamed, dear maid, these many nights of thee;
But we always were friendlier then than now,
Which made the dream more welcome than the real;
Thy head then reached my shoulder, where it does,
And sweetly nestled 'gainst my doublet (*draws her head
to his shoulder*)—so,
Thy fair white arm, not listless as 'tis now,
Then gently rested on my shoulder (*raises her right arm
to his left shoulder*)—so,
Thy bright blue eyes were not then downward cast,
But looked up bravely into mine; (*she looks up*)—just
so,
Thy sweet, low voice was not so silent then——

THANKFUL.

Nay, it did whisper what you know.

MALCOLM.

Aye, so. (*Kisses her.*)

CURTAIN.

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